

THE ECHO

Created by incarcerated people

NEWS
FROM
THE
INSIDE

WINNER OF AMERICAN PENAL PRESS AWARD FOR BEST NEWSLETTER 2025

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EASTERN OREGON CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

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AWARD-WINNING CONCERT PIANIST PLAYS PRISON VENUE

Italian Pianist Filippo Gorini Stops by Oregon During World Tour

Written by Logan Gimbel



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Award-winning Italian pianist Filippo Gorini, left, plays with cellist Hamilton Cheifetz, a professor of cello at Portland State University, during a concert EOCI on March 13, 2026.

Listening to live classical music is rare in the prison setting, but that is exactly what happened for about 50 incarcerated people and a dozen staff.

Award-winning Italian pianist Filippo Gorini visited Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution to perform.

Hamilton Cheifetz, professor of cello at Portland State University, accompanied Gorini on four pieces.

“I was nervous coming into the prison at first, but the people were so lovely,” said Gorini.

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A LEGACY OF EMPATHY

Pilot Class on Emotional Intelligence Makes Debut in 2026

Written by Kurtis Thompson and Phillip Luna

On Feb. 10 at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, a dozen incarcerated people gathered in a small room packed with tables and chairs. At the head of the table, Eric Burnham wrote on an undersized whiteboard with a red expo marker.

It was the last class of Emotional Intelligence Awareness, a course created by Burnham who holds a doctorate in psychology and counseling. The group was covering Maslow’s hierarchy of needs – a theory of human behavior developed in the 1940s.

Collectively, the 12 men had served more than 150 years — and counting — in prison.

They embraced the course and Burnham as the facilitator. After all, he was incarcerated, like them, and understood their experience.

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The Echo Mission Statement

To serve the incarcerated community by providing monthly news and other important information, while highlighting the human experience in the carceral setting.

Direct questions and comments to EOCI Institution Work Programs (IWP). All views and opinions expressed are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Corrections.

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JOURNALISM

SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM

The Echo Team Meets with Experts to Hone Skills

The **Echo** team participated in a solutions journalism workshop on March 16, 2026. The workshop was led by Camilla Mortenson and Brent Walth.

Mortenson is the editor-in-chief of Eugene Weekly and teaches journalism courses at University of Oregon. In addition, she is an advisor for the Lane Community College newspaper, The Torch, and is a board member for the rural newspaper, Highway 58 Herald, in Oakridge.

Walth is an associate professor at UO School of Journalism and Communications. He was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Explanatory Reporting in 2000, and in 2001 he shared the Pulitzer Prize for Public Service. In addition to numerous other awards, Walth is the co-director of the Catalyst journalism Project and The Charles Snowden Program for Excellence in Journalism.

Solutions journalism are stories focused on responses to societal problems, identifying data which shows effectiveness and how those solutions may be applied to other situations. For example, where one state may struggle with high homelessness rates, another state may excel at affordable housing. The journalist contrasts those two states to demonstrate possible solutions exist.

“It was like taking a college class,” said Alex Dewhurst, The Echo’s newest correspondent.

“Meeting with Camilla and Brent was enlightening,” said correspondent Brian Bement. “I feel writing solutions-driven articles should be a skill for any journalist ... having even a small part in change is rewarding.”

The workshop was held via video call for about two hours. The Echo’s advisor Berit Thorson, an alumna of UO School of Journalism and Communication, orchestrated the workshop.

“Berit has been an invaluable resource for us, even before we had a Journalism Department,” said The Echo’s associate editor, Kurtis Thompson. “I was fortunate to start writing for the newsletter only weeks after Berit started teaching us.”

Since Thorson became an advisor in August 2024, she has met with The Echo twice per month, offering her insights as a journalist. She has also arranged for about a dozen industry experts to hold workshops with the team, including several professors, journalists, an editor, a publisher and a professional photographer.

“Being able to meet with people who have been successful in the field of journalism has allowed me to learn skills that would normally be reserved for college students, something I am eternally grateful for,” correspondent Logan Gimbel said.

Institution Work Programs Coordinator Ray Peters, who oversees production of The Echo and 1664, said the training and techniques provided by professionals are also taught in accredited journalism programs. Learning, however, is a two-way street, he said.

“Journalists from the community also learn from our team,” Peters said. “They get to interact with incarcerated writers and can see their level of professionalism and what they have to offer journalism. People who work with us get perspectives on incarceration beyond what is available to most community members.” | **ECHO**

CANNABIS RESCHEDULE

Expediting the Reschedule of Marijuana

Written by Alex Dewhurst

Although marijuana is legal in Oregon, it is still subject to federal law. But on Dec. 18, 2025, President Donald Trump signed an executive order to expedite the reschedule of marijuana as less dangerous and to have potential medical uses.

Currently, cannabis is classified as a Schedule I drug, the most restrictive class the Drug Enforcement Agency gives to drugs. The order would change marijuana to a Schedule III drug based on its medical use and lower potential for abuse.

The order called for expanded research on marijuana to explore potential therapeutic benefits.

Under the executive order, Attorney General Pam Bondi was directed to complete the reschedule. Although the reschedule was initiated under the Biden administration, the process requires several hearings, evaluations, notices and public comment periods to

finalize. If the order is finalized, it could result in less severe federal penalties for new marijuana-related offenses and introduce a tax break to cannabis firms.

Federal sentencing for Schedule I drug violations are significantly harsher than Schedule III.

While Schedule I drugs often incur mandatory minimum sentences of five years or higher, Schedule III offenses grant potential judicial leeway. The lesser offenses typically result in sentences of fewer than five years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

Additionally, state-licensed cannabis firms would no longer be exempt from deducting normal business expenses on their taxes.

In a statement about a ballot measure that would have legalized cannabis in Florida, Trump said, “I believe it is time to end needless arrests and incarcerations of adults for small amounts of marijuana for personal use.”

However, more than 20 republican senators signed a letter in 2025 urging Trump to keep marijuana a Schedule I drug. The change would “undermine your strong efforts to Make America Great Again,” the letter said. “The only winners from rescheduling will be bad actors such as Communist China, while Americans will be left paying the bill.”

In contrast, The Association for Cannabis, Health, Equity and Medicine said on their website the reschedule was not enough and that marijuana should be decriminalized entirely.

“An overwhelming 88% of Americans support legalizing marijuana for medical or recreational use,” the association said.

They said legalization so far has led to fewer arrests, improved medical access and increased housing, job and educational opportunities, especially for those with past convictions.

The executive order shifted Trump’s focus on drugs to more specifically fentanyl and other Schedule II drugs such as cocaine. Also, on Dec. 18, Trump declared fentanyl a weapon of mass destruction. | **ECHO**

IN OREGON

PRISON EDUCATION DOCUMENTARY GETS OSCAR NOD

Columbia River Correctional Institution Recognized by the Academy Awards

Written by Alex Dewhurst

The Oscars shortlisted “Classroom 4,” a documentary which covered the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program at Columbia River Correctional Institution in Oregon, for Academy Award consideration.

The documentary followed traditional and incarcerated college students who shared a classroom. The 39-minute film centered around the class, titled “Crime and Punishment in U.S. History.”

James Andrew Reed, a formerly in-

carcerated student in the documentary, told Oregon Public Broadcasting he used to be unfocused and closed to other perspectives before he took the class.

“Having people come in and treat you with dignity and respect – like a human being – that allows you to focus on, ‘I messed up. I made a mistake, but that doesn’t define me,’” Reed said.

Rieko Hillyer, a professor at Lewis & Clark College, told OPB what made teaching the class so extraordinary was how much the students had in common.

“The ethos of the class is trusting that students are learning from each other and trying to create just enough structure, just enough comfort for them to sit with the discomfort of being vulnerable,” she said.

Final voting for the Academy Awards began Feb. 26, but “Classroom 4” was not nominated. However, it won Best Documentary at LA Shorts Fest and a Jury Award at Aspen Shortfest. It was also nominated for best short documentary by the Critics’ Choice Documentary Awards. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI

BUDGET CUTS IMPACT VISITING DAYS AND FAMILY EVENTS

Administrators Propose Changes to Make Family Events Possible in 2026

Written by Phillip Luna with Kurtis Thompson

The Oregon Department of Corrections faces budget restrictions in 2026. In an effort to reduce costs, the department has adjusted visitation days and annual family events are at risk.

But administrators at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution hope to find a cost-friendly way forward by reducing the staff overtime needed during family events.

VISITING DAYS SHIFT

In March, the department set a standard that all medium correctional facilities have four visiting days per week. For EOCI, however, only the scheduled days changed since they already only had four visiting days per week. Visits moved from Wednesday through Saturday to Thursday through Sunday.

“This is falling in line with the statewide budget efforts where all medium institutions will be running their visiting sessions four days a week,” said Assistant Superintendent Bryan Clark. “We were already planning on moving the visiting days so we could have the full weekend.”

Clark said the statewide change helps reduce overtime cost. Although staff are scheduled to work the visiting room, reducing the number of visiting days allows coverage of other areas.

“On the days that visiting isn’t held they have extra staff to cover other pieces, filling in other spots,” he said. “It’s not the best option, but it is direct cost savings.”

FAMILY EVENTS AT RISK

The focus on reducing overtime has also had a direct impact on family

events — a daylong, outdoor barbeque for adults in custody and their loved ones. Clark said family events also require significant staff overtime.

He submitted proposals for two events this year, one in late June and another in mid-August. The proposals have not been approved yet and he emphasized that the plans are tentative.

“One of the major changes is that, if approved, family events will be on Fridays,” said Clark. “It’s not ideal and may be harder for a lot of families, but it saves us a lot of money when you look at overtime.”

He said the events are at-cost to AICs, with any auxiliary cost covered by the welfare fund. By reducing or removing the overtime cost, there is a much higher chance of approval.

Another change to manage cost is reducing the size of the family event. EOCI has some of the largest family events in the state, with about 125-130 AIC participants and roughly 400-450 total attendees on average. Clark said if the events are approved this year the AIC limit will be 75-80 per event.

“We all want to do the family events,” he said. “We don’t want to lose them. We all wanted to do the car show and it was disappointing to hear we couldn’t.”

The annual car show, which was expected to occur in May, was victim to budget cuts this year. He hopes the family events avoid the same fate.

Clark said he has always advocated for family events, previously in his role as correctional rehabilitation manager and currently as an assistant superintendent. Additionally, he said that staff

“Our biggest goal is to make sure family events happen”

- Bryan Clark,
Assistant Superintendent

at EOCI are very supportive of finding a way to keep the events going. Dray Williams, who replaced Clark as CRM, has also been very supportive of the family events, he said.

“Our biggest goal,” he said, “is to make sure family events happen.”

Clark said he should know sometime in April if his proposals for family events have been approved.

BUDGET CUTS

In 2025, the Oregon Legislature instructed state agency leaders to present ideas for budget improvements.

By November, the Oregon Department of Corrections compiled a list of 21 budget reduction options, including efficiency improvements, policy and upkeep changes, technology modernization and service reductions.

One item proposed reducing overtime for security staff, projected to save \$5 million. The tradeoff, however, is the change may “impact visitation, large events and out-of-cell time for AICs,” according to the budget report.

ECHO

REPLACING THE FIELDS

Soccer and Softball Canceled, Pending Replacement of East and West Fields

Written by Phillip Luna

Prison administrators met with contractors to discuss replacing the east and west fields on March 26.

“Last eight years or so, it has been discussed every year,” said Assistant Superintendent Bryan Clark.

He said the field was probably leveled at some point, perhaps when the facility was converted from a state hospital to a correctional facility in 1986. However, the field is filled with pot holes and lumpy now.

The contractor will issue a bid and, if accepted, soccer and softball will be canceled for 2026 while the fields are replaced.

“They will use a power rake to make everything smooth,” Clark said. “The grass can only be planted at certain times, in the fall, so the field will be closed all season.”

Clark said the yard will still be open, even though the field will be closed.

“If the cost is not too much money, we will replace it this year,” he said. “The plan is to do both the east and west yard, but the east yard is much worse if it comes down to it.”

While budget cuts have been a restraint on facility functions, Clark said the field would be replaced out of the welfare fund, which is not part of the statewide budget restrictions.

The welfare fund is primarily supported through commissary, the general store for adults in custody. A percentage of the profits made through commissary are returned to the welfare fund.

The fund can only be used to make purchases that benefit AICs, such as replacing the weight pile a few years ago and purchasing holiday treats, supplying the annual stocking stuffer event or other items.

“The problem is that the funding is limited,” he said. “If the bid from the contractor comes back too much, then

we will have to hold off on replacing the field.”

If the fields are replaced this year, Clark said that recreation specialists Jerrad Templin and Zach Hall are hoping to have an indoor soccer league and a wiffle ball tournament, among other things. |ECHO



Photo provided by administration

On March 26, 2026, administrators from EOCI meet with contractors to discuss replacing the east and west yards.



Narcotics Anonymous
meetings available

Weekly meetings

Westside morning group: 8 a.m. Mondays in D2

Westside evening group: 6 p.m. Tuesday in D2

Eastside group: 6 p.m. Thursday in D2

H unit group: 10:15 a.m. Sunday on unit



Alcoholics Anonymous
meetings available

Weekly meetings

English group: Sunday at 1 p.m. in D2

Spanish group: Tuesday at 7.p.m. in D2

Send a communication form to Narcotics Anonymous or Alcoholic Anonymous to sign up.

AROUND EOCI

OREGON PRISONS PLAN TO ISSUE TABLETS TO ALL INCARCERATED PEOPLE

Frequently Asked Questions

Issued from the Director's Office of the Oregon Department of Corrections

Oregon prisons plan to issue every adult in custody a tablet and process mail digitally through a third-party vendor. The change is expected to roll-out in stages.

The Director's Office for the Oregon Department of Corrections issued the following responses to anticipated questions.

The Echo will continue to follow this story as it progresses and as information becomes available.

Are tablets changing? Will everyone get one?

ODOC is planning for a future system where each AIC has access to their own state assigned tablet.

This is still in the planning stages and there is still much work to do. Rollout will occur gradually across facilities. The order of distribution has not yet been established.

When will the new tablets arrive?

There is no set date yet. Implementation will be phased and may vary by facility.

What will the tablet allow me to do?

Tablets will continue to support the communication, programming, entertainment, and approved digital content you have access to today.

Will mail change?

Yes. After the rollout is complete, ODOC anticipates transitioning to digitally scanned mail through a third-party vendor. This change is not expected until late 2026.

Currently, there are no planned changes to legal mail or packages.

What will happen to physical mail?

Most personal mail is expected to be scanned and delivered digitally. Legal mail and certain other materials will still be handled physically.

Will this effect communication with friends and family?

The goal is to improve access to communication, not reduce it. Digital mail and tablets provide faster, more consistent access to approved content.

What happens if I don't understand how to use the tablet?

Facilities will provide instructions, orientation materials, and support as needed during rollout.

Will this cost money?

The tablets will be provided to AICs at no cost. Some features may be free while others may involve fees, depending on future agreements and policy decisions. ODOC will announce details when finalized.

Do I need to do anything right now?

No. AICs do not need to take any action at this time. All changes will be communicated well in advance. | **ECHO**

WASHINGTON PRISON RAISES BUTTERFLIES

Perseveration Project Bolsters Ecosystem in Prison-Based Butterfly Rearing Program

Written by Kurtis Thompson

Captives are released from a Washington women's prison every year – in the thousands.

The endangered Taylor's checkerspot butterflies are being raised in a captive rearing program at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women. But this is just one preservation pro-

gram spearheaded by the Sustainability in Prisons Project.

The SPP, a partnership between the Evergreen State College and Washington Department of Corrections, teamed up with the Oregon Zoo and Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife to bring multiple sustainability

programs into Washington prisons.

SPP Co-Director Carrie Leroy said, "The butterfly program is just part of a broader picture of restoring prairie landscapes in the state of Washington."

According to Leroy, prison participants are also raising rare and endangered prairie plants.

There are conservation nurseries hosted in three Washington prisons. Together, they have raised more than a million plants of 60 different species.



SALT REMOVED FROM MAINLINE, PEPPER REMAINS

With All The Flavors in the World, Don't Choose Salty

Written by Chris Ainsworth with contributions from Brian Daniel Bement

Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Salt spills from a shaker onto a counter top. Salt shakers were removed from meal service in February 2026.

In February, salt shakers were removed from meal service.

Notices posted on housing unit bulletin boards at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution cited medical concerns as the cause of the removal. The explanation left many around the facility frustrated, and some needing salt supplements.

"The taking of salt is unnecessary," said resident Ernesto Quiroz. "We already don't get paid enough to buy

basic things to survive here."

According to EOCI Food Services Manager Liza Emory, removing salt from mainline meals was a stipulation in grant funding the department has received.

"Due to the state having a long standing low sodium grant from Oregon State University, all institutions were directed to remove salt from the dining rooms to be complaint with set standards for the grant," she said.

environments where inmates can make contributions to society," said Leroy.

Adults in custody can volunteer to participate in the program. Leroy believes this meets SPP's broader restoration goals.

"Volunteering our time makes us feel good about ourselves, increases our self-esteem and provides meaning to our lives," she said. "These are practices that we should be promoting in prisons, so that while people are doing time, they are also doing good." | ECHO

Leroy also said checkerspot butterfly releases doubled thanks to the captive rearing program. In 2025, more than 10,000 butterflies were introduced to Washington prairie ecosystems.

Other projects include rearing Oregon spotted frogs, service animal and pet training, recycling and more. But the SPP wishes to rehabilitate more than prairies and species.

"We are transforming prisons from sterile, punitive environments to environments of growth and change, to

Additionally, Emory said EOCI was the last correctional facility in Oregon to remove salt from the dining room.

Salt is one of the oldest known food seasonings and is an electrolyte.

For all its uses, however, overuse can result in medical issues such increased risk of cardio vascular diseases and hypertension.

Some adults require more than the daily recommended amount. Julio Sanchez-Cruz said he suffers from Ulcerative Colitis and is now prescribed salt through medical. A symptom of his disease is dehydration, causing Sanchez-Cruz to lack electrolytes.

Until February he was adding these electrolytes to his diet in the form of salt during meal service.

"Medical gives me a handful of salt once a week," Sanchez-Cruz said. "It doesn't matter to me where I get the salt, as long as I get it to lower my blood pressure."

Medical can provide salt to those with health-related issues. However, with salt removed from the dining hall, many AICs now have to budget for an additional monthly cost if they wish to continue to season their meals. | ECHO

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

If you have an article you would like to comment on, a question about the publications or anything you would like the editors to read, contact the IWP: Journalism Department.

We publish letters to the editor periodically.

AROUND EOCI

EMPATHY continued from front page

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Eric Burnham, center, facilitates a 7-week course he created called Emotional Intelligence Awareness on Feb. 10, 2026. Burnham earned a doctorate in psychology and counseling while incarcerated.

In 2001, Burnham was sentenced to prison after taking a man's life. At the time, he said he lacked education and purpose. But that would change.

He attained his GED in 2003 and continued on to college. He joined 12-step programs and worked as a tutor in his prison's education department for 16 years. In 2021, he reached the pinnacle of education, earning his doctorate through Liberty University.

Then Burnham wrote the course for emotional intelligence, which he published in his book, "Emotional Intelligence Awareness: New Ways of Interacting after Trauma and Incarceration."

Five years later, in January 2026, he began facilitating a 7-week pilot program based on the course he created.

A PEER-LED CLASS

"This class helped me realize that I

have a unique light," said participant Kenneth Nance. "Who knows? Maybe I'm the guy who's going to get a degree, or be a talker."

Correctional counselor Joe Byrnes, who helps Burnham coordinate the class, said peer-led programs are "definitely more effective" than traditional, staff-led classes.

"Guidance tends to be better received when the instructor has walked in those shoes and can relate personally to the struggle," he said.

While Maslow is a central topic, the class' primary focus is empathy and balancing personal wellbeing with the wellbeing of others – concepts which resonated with participants.

"I feel like selfishness and lack of empathy is what got me here in the first place," said Jesus Villarreal. "With classes like this, it helps you understand

that other people do matter and that you're a part of the universe, not the center of it."

Some may consider the course rehabilitative, but Burnham disagrees. Rehabilitation, he said, means restoration to a previous healthy or productive state.

"Many of us need habilitation – we never had it right to begin with," he said. "We need to learn to balance our needs and motives against the needs and motives of others in appropriate ways. That has been the primary overarching theme of this course."

FINDING LIMINAL SPACE

The class examines behavioral roots by dissecting thoughts and emotions, which Burnham said is crucial to developing empathy.

He said emotional intelligence has two forms: intrapersonal and interpersonal.

Intrapersonal is internal and involves self-regulation, personal responsibility and behaviors. Interpersonal involves interactions with others, including social relationships, awareness of one's effect on others and handling consequences.

"Trauma and emotional wounding leave scars that impact how we process emotions, shaping both our intrapersonal and interpersonal relational flexibility and resiliency," Burnham said.

Burnham said understanding these

inner workings is important, because responding rather than reacting on impulse is a class tenet. For that concept, Burnham teaches on liminal space – the space between internal process and external action, like the doorframe between rooms.

“When you are standing in a door-frame,” he said, “you are neither in the room nor out of the room. I use this metaphor in class. It’s the space between feeling and acting – being aware of what you are feeling without being prisoner to reaction.”

Participant Mychael Lee said that visualizing liminal space gives him time to consider negative interactions.

“I’m able to stop, sit in the emotion and decide if it’s going to be a positive reaction I’m going to have,” Lee said. “This has totally changed my way of thinking.”

CEMENTING AND EXPANDING

Byrnes said he received excellent feedback from the class participants. He hopes to make the class a permanent offering at EOICI.

Regarding expansion to other facilities, however, Byrnes said it is too early to tell.

“It’s hard to say because we are still at the beginning stages,” he said. “But feedback from participants is trending towards a popular program.”

Burnham said he could see the class expanding to other prisons, even women’s correctional facilities.

“It’s geared towards men right now,” he said. “We have a section on toxic masculinity. But I want to collaborate and create a model for women.”

Burnham also said he expects slow progress. Getting approval to facilitate the course at EOICI took two years, he said.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Eric Burnham, right, answers a question from class participant Michael Jump, center, during a class on Feb. 10, 2026. Burnham’s book “Emotional Intelligence Awareness: New Ways of Interacting after Trauma & Incarceration” is the foundation for the course and can be purchased on Amazon.

According to participants, the importance of emotional intelligence cannot be understated. The class should be a requirement for other peer support programs at the facility.

“I don’t understand how you can be peer support without having emotional intelligence,” said Michael Jump. “If we missed emotional intelligence ... it’s a giant lack of awareness.”

For Burnham, however, the path forward is about more than just cementing and expanding the class. It is about building a legacy of empathy.

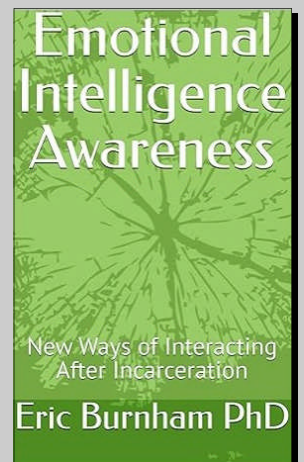
“I want to show that empathy is not weakness. Empathy is humanness,” said Burnham. “You can’t be a better human unless you understand that other people are human too.” | ECHO

Sign Up Today!

To sign up for the Emotional Intelligence Awareness class, send a communication form to correctional counselor Joe Byrnes.

Participants must be incentive level 3; however, the book “Emotional Intelligence Awareness: New Ways of Interacting after Trauma and Incarceration,” is available on Amazon.

Classes are typically held on Tuesday afternoons, for about two hours. The class is seven weeks long.



CONCERT

PIANO continued from front page

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

About 50 people attended the March 13, 2026 concert with Italian pianist Filippo Gorini. Gorini played four pieces with cellist Hamilton Cheifetz and several more solo pieces. The event was Gorini's first time playing in a prison.

"Once I started playing we created a beautiful connection. It was like playing at any other venue," Gorini said.

The concert was held on March 13 in the prison's gymnasium.

"This music is not just a form of entertainment. It really has to do with the deepest parts of the soul," he said.

Gorini chose Oregon as the fourth stop in his world tour, "Sonata for Seven Cities." It is his only U.S. stop.

Prior to Oregon, Gorini played in Vienna, Austria; Cape Town, South Africa; and Hong Kong, China. His next location is London, England.

During his month-long residency, he will travel around the state playing at different locations. His goal is to bring live piano music to as many places as possible.

"You can use music and art as a way to experience, as a great Italian writer said, a 1,000 different lives in one," said Gorini.

"In Vienna, [Gorini] played in a psychiatric hospital. In Hong Kong, a homeless shelter," said Amelia De Vaal, the director of operations for Portland Piano International. De Vaal is travelling with Gorini. "In South Africa he did a whole lot of outreach. The one thing he's never done is play in a prison."

The first piece Gorini performed was by Franz Schubert. He said it has sentimental value because he first heard it performed by someone who later became his music teacher and who recently passed away.

"This beautiful piece that has to do with our soul, our longing and tenderness. It was the first point from which I wanted to start, offering you the music I love the most," said Gorini.

Gorini said he chooses pieces he connects with emotionally.

"Such an inspiring and beautiful performance of that Schubert piece," said Hamilton Cheifetz, after Gorini's

performance. “It makes me think that music has so many kinds of power. One kind of power it has is to bring people together.”

After the Schubert piece, Cheifetz and Gorini played together. Cheifetz selected four pieces that were important to him and that he enjoyed playing. For years, Cheifetz said he would opt to play new and more complicated music, but about 10 years ago he decided to play what he enjoys.

“What I really want to do is play really beautiful melodies and pieces that are pleasurable and inspiring in a real way,” said Cheifetz.

Of the four pieces Cheifetz selected, only the first one, titled “The Swan,” was originally composed for the cello. The third piece, “Cabatina” by John Ireland, was a duet composed for violin and piano. After listening to the piece multiple times, Cheifetz found the sheet music and converted it for the cello.

“The duets were really good. There was a lot of emotions in the pieces,” said Jacob Stursa, an incarcerated person who attended the event.

In the brief pauses between each piece, the gymnasium was quiet. Some members of the audience were listening with eyes closed while others were sitting on the edge of their seats.

“Classically trained musicians can convey a wider depth of emotion with their instruments compared to other genres,” said Stursa.

The last piece Gorini played was a sonata by Ludwig van Beethoven, which he said was his favorite piece to play. He said Beethoven changed the way humanity writes and listens to music.

sound. He changed everything – the harmonies, the melodies, the rhythm, the intensity,” said Gorini. “For me it’s one of the most moving pieces I can play on my instrument, the piano, that I wanted to offer you.”

The 20-minute sonata, titled “Sonata

No. 31,” includes three movements.

The first Gorini described as very heavenly, harmonious, noble and full of grace. The second movement, which is the shortest, breaks that harmony and a problem arises.

(continued on next page...)



Photo by Juan Sanchez/IWP

Pianist Filippo Gorini perform during the March 13, 2026 concert at EOCI. Gorini will also be performing for incarcerated women at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility in Wilsonville.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Filippo Gorini, right, answers questions from the audience after the concert.

“He changed how the instruments

CONCERT



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Luis Trybom, right, gets an autograph from award-winning pianist Filippo Gorini after the concert on March 13, 2026 concert.

The last movement is the longest and starts with grief and sorrow, but ends full of joy and feeling of soaring into blue skies, he said.

When the final note of the sonata settled over the residents, many hesitated before applauding. After a moment, Gorini received a standing ovation.

After the performance, audience members were able to ask Gorini questions or offer observations.

Gorini is from Italy and has been playing the piano since age 6. At 20, he won first place in the Telekom-Beethoven Competition — a worldwide contest for pianist.

Less than 10 years later, in 2022, Gorini received one of Italy's highest musical honors, the Premio Abbiati. The award is given to the best soloist of the year.

After EOCI, Gorini played at the

Pendleton Center for the Arts the following day.

He will also play at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, the women's

“The whole ethos of this project is to meet people where they are at,” she said. “[Music] is a vehicle and it communicates.” | **ECHO**



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

The piano Filippo Gorini played during the concert sits idly after the show on March 13, 2026. Amelia De Vaal, the director of operations for Portland Piano International, said the piano was donated a few days prior to the event.

state prison in Wilsonville.

The piano Gorini played at EOCI was donated to Portland Piano International a few days prior to Gorini's performance. The piano was brought into the facility specifically for his concert.

De Vaal said the piano needs to be tuned after it is moved, but there are logistical hurdles for playing in a prison. Because of these hurdles, the piano had to be tuned the day prior. Although challenging, De Vaal said putting on a show in the prison was worth it.

A TON OF CHICKEN, LITERALLY

Enrichment Club Sells Meal in Fundraiser for Children’s Organ Transplant Association

Written by Chris Ainsworth



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Steam collects on the lids of chicken strip and jojo platters on Feb. 24, 2026. The Enrichment Club sold the meal as a fundraiser for Children’s Oregon transplant Association.

The first Enrichment Club fundraiser of 2026 raised money for Children’s Organ Transplant Association. The club handed out more than a ton of Safeway chicken strips, nearly 550 pounds of jojos and around 3,600 donuts at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution on Feb. 24, 25 and 26 raising approximately \$4,000.

“I participated in the fundraiser to share with my friends,” said EOICI resident Jesus Ramirez-Aguirre. “It made me feel good to be able to share.”

Adults in custody had five options to choose from — a combination of chicken and jojos, half a dozen donuts and two sodas. The items could be purchased together or broken up.

But the event had its hang ups.

Originally, Cherry-Lime Sprite, Cherry Dr. Pepper and Orange Cream-sicle Dr. Pepper were offered, but due to vendor availability and discontinued

products, a last-minute change was made by the Enrichment Club. Instead, the club sold Strawberry Fanta, Cherry Coke and Dr. Pepper Cream Soda.

While soda can be popular in prison because it is rarely available, so can supporting causes that help children. The Enrichment Club has donated to COTA before. In 2022, the club raised more than \$8,800 to help a local Pendleton High School student pay for her heart transplant.

“Originally, we selected COTA because when we were brainstorming it seemed like a no brainer,” Enrichment Club President Ben Edwards said. “People can get behind an organization that works with helping children.”

The fundraiser was open to all AICs. Around 550 people purchased the meal. Offering donuts and sodas by themselves allowed an additional 78 AICs to participate in the fundraiser. The 628 AICs that participated represents almost half of EOICI’s prison population. | **ECHO**



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Call center workers Robert Wyller, left, and John Damron pose with chicken strips, jojos, donuts and sodas on Feb. 25, 2026.

AROUND EOCI

MORE THAN 880 PIZZAS DELIVERED TO EOCI

GOGI Fundraiser Generates Nearly \$8,000 to Support the Program and Purchase Books

Written by Chris Ainsworth



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Boxes of Domino's pizza sit on a table while residents file into the facility's multipurpose room to pick up their order on Feb. 6, 2026.

Domino's pizza employees in Pendleton filled an order of more than 880 pizzas a few days before the 2025 Super Bowl. The large request had nothing to do with the sporting event, however.

The pizza and sodas arrived Feb. 5 and 6, days before the New England Patriots and Seattle Seahawks faced off in the Super Bowl.

GOGI partnered with Domino's to provide pizzas for 546 participants and raise money for their group at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

GOGI, or Getting Out by Going In, is a cognitive behavioral program which holds fundraisers regularly.

Facility residents waited in line while club members verified names and passed out the coveted goods.

"I bought the GOGI fundraiser be-

cause people like that feed. I plan on giving the pizza to those who can't afford it," said participant Darren Foix-

Jones. "I don't usually participate in the GOGI fundraisers, because it's not clear what the money is being used for."

GOGI offers weekly group meetings and helps members complete self-study and group courses. The funds raised support the purchase of books and other materials. The club also partners with the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to hold an annual suicide awareness and prevention walk.

"I'm involved in GOGI and believe the group is a positive outreach for people," said Doran Hardman. "I'm planning to buy future fundraisers because it's a lot better food than what's served."

The club organizes multiple fundraisers throughout the year. The Domino's pizza fundraiser was the first of 2026 and raised approximately \$7,695.

GOGI's next fundraiser is a Carne Asada meal for \$21 from Rolberto's in Pendleton. | **ECHO**



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Roger Williams poses for a photo with two pizzas and two sodas on Feb. 6, 2026.

MAKING SUPER BOWL NACHOS

Prison Gives Out About 1,300 Nacho Kits; Incarcerated People Spice Up the Meal

Written by Chris Ainsworth

Prison administrators organized a nacho kit handout at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution for the 2025 Super Bowl. Six kitchen workers prepared the kits on Feb. 5 and they were passed them out during lunch service on Feb. 8.

Since 2024 the nacho kit handout has become an annual event.

The kits included corn tortilla chips, salsa verde, sour cream, jalapeño slices and nacho cheese. Adults in custody are able to buy items from commissary to build onto their nacho kits, such as meat sticks, prepackaged chicken, cheese, instant refried beans and rice.

AICs used the kits, but added regular meal and commissary items to spice up their nachos. | **ECHO**



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Several nacho meals sit on a table in the H2 dayroom on Feb. 8, 2026. AICs used the nacho kits, which were provided by the facility, as well as commissary and meal items to make their 2025 Super Bowl nachos.

SELF-IMPROVEMENT CLASS GRADUATES NINE

Class Based on the Book “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”

Written by Logan Gimbel

Nine incarcerated people graduated from a self-improvement class based on the book “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” by Stephen Covey.

The class was taught by Release Counselor Mike Markle. The graduation was held in EOICI’s multipurpose room on Feb. 20, 2026.

During classes, students would read and discuss the book with Markle providing examples for applying the habits.

“This is the one of the steps in becoming the men you want to become,” said Markle in his opening speech.

Markle invited the graduates to speak about their experience in the class.



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Class graduates and the facilitator pose for a photo on Feb. 20, 2026. Back row, from left: David Crouch, Brian Hardegger, Mike Markle, Lucius Wilson, Donny Pitchforth. Seated, from left: Andre Johnson and Colby Benson.

“Every week was an impactful week. I got a lot out of it,” said graduate André Johnson.

People interested in taking the class should contact Markle through a communication form. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI

TWENTY-SEVEN STUDENTS EARN DIPLOMAS

Proud Teachers and Families Recognize Graduates During Ceremony

Written by Alex Dewhurst



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Seventeen of the 27 graduates pose for a group photo on the education stairwell prior to their graduation ceremony. The ceremony was held in the multipurpose building on March 20, 2026.

“If the world could see what I see, they would see tough men brought to tears for accomplishing something they never thought they could,” said teacher Patty Rasmussen, congratulating 27 GED graduates at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

Rasmussen was one of around 100 people in attendance at EOCI’s multipurpose building on March 20. Also there to recognize graduates was education director Greg Jones, teachers M. Furstenberg and S. Schuette, incarcerated tutors and the graduates’ friends and family.

The ceremony began with “Pomp and Circumstance” playing over speakers as graduates were applauded into the building. Once seated, Jones

thanked the students, tutors and staff for their collaboration and achievements. Jones then introduced Furstenberg to describe the process of getting a GED in prison.

“They are allowed to come up to education for an hour a day,” she said. “The class is 50 minutes and if the officers are a little bit late getting the line called or if any kind of mishap happens between them, generously we get 40 minutes of class.”

She said it is difficult to condense 13 years of conventional education into 12 weeks with less than 5 hours of class per week – on top of being in prison.

Furstenberg said the GED test covers reading and language arts, science, so-

cial studies and math. Students are required to take a preliminary exam and a final.

After Furstenberg, Schuette gave the next speech.

“I am so proud of you,” she said through tears. “If your mother is not here to say that to you, let your heart hear that from a mother.”

Schuette said that incremental change and the willingness to learn will allow graduates to achieve what they want in life, despite their background.

Rasmussen followed with another emotional speech.

“If you can’t tell, we love what we do,” she said. “If the world could see what I’ve seen, they would see classrooms filled with

laughter, learning, respect and resilience. Maybe in some cases more laughter than anything else.”

Rasmussen encouraged graduates to continue learning and to lead their peers by example.

After staff gave their speeches, it was time for the tutors to give theirs.

Taylor Carson said he did not know any math when he came to prison.

“Not even long division,” he said. “For years I told myself I wasn’t capable – that it was beyond me. But, the career I always wanted requires strong math skills so, this time I tried to learn it for real.”

Carson said after a month and a half of practice, he passed GED math tests.

“I had to stop saying I can’t and just try,” he said. “And that’s what all you graduates have done. You put away the assumptions and the lies you can’t – and you just tried. You took responsibility for your lives and your learning despite all the hurdles.”

Several graduates also gave speeches at the ceremony.

“I wanted to prove to my family that I could do better when I get out – that I am not going to stick to my same old ways,” said Victor Samaniego. “I am 30 now and I didn’t think my education was even possible. That’s what pushed me.”

Samaniego said he tried getting his GED while he was incarcerated in Arizona, but because of his environment he was unsuccessful.

“If it wasn’t for my tutors and my teachers I wouldn’t be here, literally would not be here,” he said.

Samaniego said he hopes to go to college when he releases.

Another graduate, Alejandro Bermea, said he was thankful for his wife’s attendance and gracious for his teachers.

“Don’t let their humility fool you because they are all true superheroes,” he said. “The teachers who strive not only to teach but to free people who, like me, feel imprisoned by their own negative view of themselves because of their mistakes.”

After the final graduate speech, Rasmussen called for each graduate to receive their diplomas. The room clapped for each as they walked to the stage and shook hands with staff.

“Alright graduates, please stand up,” she said. “You may now move your tassels from the right to the left.”

The reception concluded with coffee, cookies and juice for graduates to enjoy with their family and friends.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Educator M. Furstenberg speaks to graduates from the podium during the graduation ceremony on March 20, 2026. After the ceremony, Furstenberg said her “whole view on what we are as humans has changed” after working with incarcerated people.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Victor Samaniego, right, shakes hands with Education Director Greg Jones as he receives his diploma. “I wanted to prove to my family that I could do better,” he said.

For the graduates, earning a GED reduces their statistical risk of recidivism.

Correctional education programs lower recidivism rates in formerly incar-

cerated people by 43% according to a 2013 study by the RAND corporation, a nonprofit focused on public policies and initiatives. |ECHO

CONGRATULATIONS

I had to stop saying I can't and just try. And that's what all you graduates have done. You put away the assumptions and the lies you can't and you just tried.

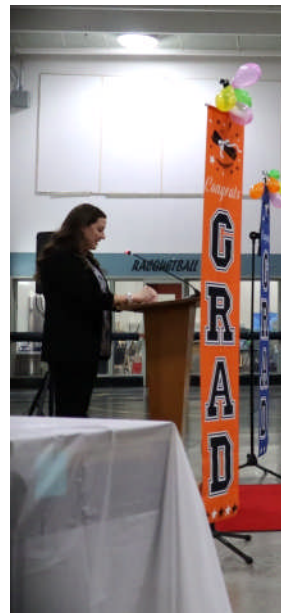
— Taylor Carson, tutor



Correctional education programs lower recidivism rates of formerly incarcerated people by

43%

according to a 2013 study by the RAND corporation, a nonprofit focused on public policies.



2026 GRADUATES



“ My whole life, I haven’t had any form of education. Going to work at countless jobs, it always has to say on the application, ‘Do you have your GED or diploma?’

I can check that box now ... and I can go to college if I want to.”

— Skyler Carbone, graduate



AROUND EOICI

LIFE AFTER LIFE PRACTICE

Buddhist Monks Visit EOICI for the First time

Written by Alex Dewhurst



Photo provided by Religious Services

Buddhist monks Khenpo Thuthop, left, Xian Zhong pose for a photo in the prison chapel on March 12, 2026.

For the first time, two Buddhist monks visited Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

Monks Xian Zhong and Khenpo Thuthop, from Palbay Ling Center in San Diego, wore crimson red robes and golden sashes made of silk in contrast to attendees' prison blues.

Zhong, who led the event, said he has traveled the United States for around 20 years and has visited more than 40 prisons teaching Buddhism.

Zhong asked the 14 attendees to participate in a ceremonial bow before he gave a sermon about practice and mindfulness.

"Practice, especially when we walk down the path of enlightenment is like building muscle," Zhong said. "In order to be happy, we try to exercise, eat well and rest our body to be strong. But how about our mind?"

Zhong said although the body is finite, the mind never dies.

"This is a long journey – life after life practice," he said.



Photo provided by Religious Services

Buddhist monks Xian Zhong speaks at the podium during the March 12, 2026 event.

He simplified the principles to practice Buddhism and said, "do not do any negative, cultivate good and to take care of your mind."

Zhong also said Buddhist practices are for everyone, and the principles can be used as a framework for living.

"There is no rush to become a Buddhist," he said.

One attendee asked Zhong where to start his Buddhist journey.

"I think it can be very simple – I want to be free from sufferings," Zhong said. "It doesn't matter who you are or where you came ... we don't want to be suffering. However, our mind is like a parachute – it only works when it opens."

He said Buddhists open their mind through learning, meditating and practicing.

The event ended with a chant Zhong said was more than 2,000 years old. He said it was about taking refuge in the Buddha and what he called the "four immeasurable practices; love and kindness, compassion, joy and equality."

| ECHO



Paul Adric is a mentor with the contact officer program at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. He also trains service animals for the Joys of Living Assistance Dog training program.

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Featuring Paul Adric

The Mentor Program is... In the early stages right now. We are trying to build a foundation. We have great officers in charge right now – Lt. Booker and officer Taylor.

Staff have to deal with a lot already – they are over-worked. We have a lot of [AICs] here that are sick and tired of being sick and tired. Sometimes you just need someone to talk to, so we are giving people an opportunity.

As your mentor I... Would find out what are some of your goals. Are you a red tag and smoking drugs and that's where you're at in your time? I want to find out if that's something you are truly done with. I want to help people who want to help themselves.

I will see what your goals are and see what we can do to accomplish those goals. Maybe get you started on jobs, or talking to staff and getting you into different programs. If you are a spiritual person, I recommend signing up for church and getting in touch with your higher power.

If you ever need me... Contact staff and let them know you need to talk to me. Maybe I can bring the dog out and walk with you on the compound. It can be with any problem, family problems, issues with another inmate on the unit.

My mentoring style is... Listening and anonymity. What we talk about stays between me and you. People want to be heard and they want to be validated. I listen to what they say and I ask, "Do you think it would be smart for you to take off on this guy?"

Anyone hesitant to sign up for the program should... Step outside of yourself. If you keep doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results, that's not very emotionally intelligent. If you think every time you are upset and you can lash out, if you think drugs are going to get rid of the hurt and pain – all it's going to do is dull it, numb it for a minute. Then it's going to come back when you sober up.

I would describe myself as... Easy going – sometimes complicated. I think we all have troubles getting out of our own way. Because of my upbringing I've had to learn to become emotionally intelligent. I would say kind. I like to surround myself with people who are like-minded and want to better themselves. The biggest thing about me is the want, the need to change.

I spend my free time... Training dogs, working out and studying. **ECHO**

GOOD TO KNOW

FINDING PRISON NEWS ON EDOVO

Some People Prefer Prison Publications

Written by Brian Daniel Bement

“It’s real news to me, more than the stuff on Fox News or CNN,” said Gerald Carver, a resident at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. “The news on television doesn’t feel like it’s a part of my life.”

Carver, like many incarcerated people, find prison publications more relatable.

Edovo, an information and education application found on institution tablets, publishes prison news outlets.

Here are seven of them:

News Inside

This publication has a collection of criminal justice news written by incarcerated people. They are supported by The Marshall Project, a non-partisan, non-profit news organization covering the U.S. criminal justice system.

The Mule Creek Post

The Mule Creek Post is written and published by incarcerated journalists at Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, California. The publication is sponsored by Pollen Initiative. The newspaper pro-

vides information on reading and writing in addition to their reporting.

Bad Gulp! Reviews of Prisons

This humorous publication by LGBTQ incarcerated people feature bad reviews of prisons across the nation, blending satirical wit and true events into unbelievable stories.

San Quentin Criminal Justice

This publication is a branch of San Quentin News. They report on the legal community’s rehabilitative work. Their goal is to increase community safety and achieve social justice. The publication is sponsored by Pollen Initiative.

Hard Climb Journal

Hard Climb Journal is a publication out of California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi sponsored by Pollen Initiative. Their journalists are devoted to writing articles on social justice.

The Loop

The Loop publish incarcerated writers and provide tools and ideas for writing stories and creating artwork while incar-

cerated. Their magazine provides insight and practical advice to help those struggling with incarceration.

CCWF Paper Trail

This publication is written by incarcerated journalists at Central California Women’s Facility, the largest women’s prison in the world. The publication is sponsored by Pollen Initiative.

The National Resource Council reports the presence of electronic tablets in prisons and jails in America has drastically increased the distribution of publications among incarcerated people. There are 25 newspapers in 12 states currently published.

This reemergence of prison press could itself be an indication of shifting attitudes towards criminal justice, said Jesse Vasquez, co-founder of Pollen Initiative in an online interview with The Dailey Yonder.

“When you look at the pendulum of criminal justice reform, it shifts so slowly in the way of progress and so quickly in the way of tough on crime,” said Vasquez. “So, when you have a prison administration open its doors to you, you have to strike while the iron is hot because you don’t know when that door is going to close.” | ECHO



On Edovo

Also available on Edovo are The Echo and 1664. Locate either by typing the publication name into the search box.

More than 1,000 prisons in the United States have access to Edovo. In many cases, readers can access these publications and others regardless of what prison they are held in.



VOLLEYBALL SEASON CONCLUDES

Single Elimination Tournament Ends in G4 Crown

Written by Jamil Chavis

The EOCI volleyball tournament began in March after exhibition games seeded seven teams in each the bracket. The tournament was single elimination, best two out of three sets.

“Let’s try to bump, set, then get the ball over,” said Justin Waldrip of B1 housing unit. B1 was the first seed on the west side of the volleyball playoffs.

“It’s important for everybody to be on their spot,” said Waldrip.

Waldrip instructed his teammates during warmups before their March 3 match against A2, a last-minute roster addition.

Sports commissioner Ben Edwards made an exception for the A2 team addition because there were five teams

on the west and six on the east. The addition made the brackets even.

A2 advanced after defeating A3, but lost to B1.

On the east side, G4 and G3 were loss free in exhibition games and received automatic advancement as top-seeded teams for the east. G3, however, lost to H1 in the second bracket.

“We didn’t practice enough for us to beat H1,” said G3’s Juan Diaz after the loss. “Being a top seed meant nothing.”

H1 moved on to the eastside championship game versus G4, who won their first game.

Micah Kennedy, Eric Evans and Romil Arcinas of G4 used practiced

passing, sets and attacks during the east side championship games. Their team averaged a win margin of nine points while averaging 14 spikes per game, which proved too much for H1.

“They’re good, but not good enough,” said Arcinas.

G4 won the east side bracket and were poised to take on the west side champion.

“Last year we lost. We’re not losing to the west side (this year),” said G4’s Katwell Kinsio.

B1 pushed past A1 on final game of the west side.

During the championship, G4 players took an early 11 point lead. B1 rallied, but G4 held on.

The trio of Kennedy, Arcinas and Evans’ pass, set and attack routine were too much for B1. G4 won the volleyball tournament. | **ECHO**

Go to Edovo on tablets for writing courses, original music, and a catalog of incarcerated writers published by Bridgeworks

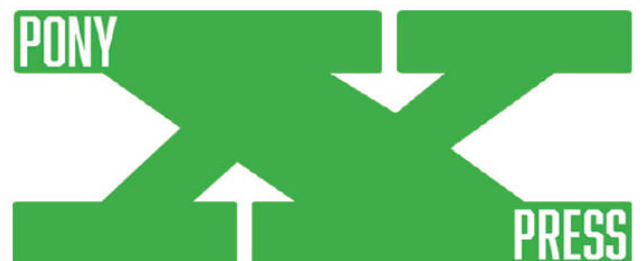


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VIDEO GAMES



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

GAME REVIEW: GUNDAM BREAKER 4

A Fast-Paced Action Game with Buildable Robot-Like Models

Written by Logan Gimbel

A mobile suit **Gundam** game was added to the Nintendo Switch game list in July 2025.

Gundam Breaker 4 is a fast-paced third-person action game with deep customization options. The game is based around collecting and building Gunpla kits.

Mobile suit Gundam is a long running manga and anime series where the characters pilot large mech suits called Gundams.

Gunpla are buildable robot-like models based on the popular Mobile Suit Gundam manga and anime series.

The collectable kits include a wide range of gunplas from across the Gundam universe and include many fan favorites such as the RX-78.

When players first start the game, they receive a basic Gunpla to complete a tutorial. The tutorial teaches players how to build, customize and battle with their Gunplas.

Players will earn new parts, decals, paints and accessory-like components.

Depending on their build choices, players will have access to two different offensive and defensive skill sets.

OP skills are cooldown based and EX skills require players to fill an ability bar before the EX skills can be used. Players fill the EX skill bar by attacking or receiving damage.

There are four modes of play; story, quest, bounty hunts and survival.

Each is received from the mission

counter desk, with all of the missions being combat-based.

The story has seven chapters with 36 individual missions.

Quests are side missions which allows players to acquire exclusive parts and decals.

On bounty hunts, players will select three specific enemies to fight. Survival mode pits the players against 50 waves of increasingly difficult enemies.

When selecting a mission, players can bring along companions to help them battle.

When completing a mission for the first-time, players may only bring pre-set companions, but replaying the missions allows players to bring companions of their choice.

The game has a fast-paced hack-and-slash feel, but it truly shines as a Gunpla kit builder. Players can create

completely new Gunplas or build their favorite Mobile Suits from about 250 Gunpla model kits.

When building, players can select which head, left arm, right arm, chest, legs and back attachment to use. Some Gunpla parts come with different active skills, but all parts have passive abilities attached.

Once a player finds a skill they enjoy, they can permanently access that skill by increasing the rarity of the skill granting part.

Increasing a parts rarity is done by sacrificing other parts or using an in-game resource called plastic.

As a part's rarity increases, players can attach more abilities to it.

The passive abilities can be replaced by using the "synthesis" option.

Players can also change the model's paint scheme either by painting each piece individually or applying colors and textures as a whole.

Pre-set paint schemes are also available. Some paint options allow the player to change the texture of material, such as adding a metallic or carbon fiber look. Players can also add effects such as chipping, battle damage or weathering to their Gunpla.

For fans of model building the game includes the option to create dioramas — a type of miniature display — using their favorite kits. Through the diorama mode players place and pose various models and add effects such as weapons shooting and explosions.

Gundam Breaker 4 is available from FLE for \$69. Players who enjoy action games with deep customization and collectability may be at home with this game.

Estimated play time: approximately 17 hours for speed run, 45+ for 100% completion. |ECHO

MORE VIDEO GAME TIPS

Contributed by Nickolas Vega

In the past I have written game-playing tips for everyone. They were kind of general, so this time I want to share some more advanced tips.

Options: Check the options menu when booting up a game for the first time. Some games, such as Fatal Bullet, have options that can only ever be changed from the main menu and some games unlock additional options after completion.

Prioritize speed: In most games, characters typically have a choice between strength and speed. If you focus on speed, it'll allow your characters to act more frequently. This not only translates to being able to attack more, but provides more chances in battle to heal, escape or do other actions.

Acquire passives: Passive abilities are those which require no work on your part to activate during battle. It's much better to acquire a passive ability that allows you to strengthen an action — such as extended perfect dodges, for example — than one which simply gives you a few more stat points you can obtain by leveling up.

If in doubt, keep everything: Keep everything you pick up around the world. The game might even tell you that it's scrap, just to find out at the end of the game there's someone who would've traded the legendary Excalibur for the 999 scrap you carelessly sold for 1 copper a piece.

Replay through areas: Some areas will change depending on in-game weather or time; other areas are procedurally generated, meaning they change every time you enter, so rewards can

change as well.

Control frame rate: Some games allow the frame rate to be adjusted. A low rate not only allows a game to operate more smoothly, but the processing done on the switch motherboard can keep the switch temperature down and the battery to last incrementally longer.

Also, lower frame rates affect enemies too meaning in action games enemies take longer to do their actions, allowing the player more time to dodge or parry.

Watch credits: Some games have hidden messages in their end credits or entirely new scenes which may be missed if skipped through. Be patient and watch the credits.

Take a step back: If a games challenges seems too difficult in the moment, take a few days off and come back to it.

In the interim, you never know if you'll discover a solution extemporaneously just by playing a game of basketball or in a random conversation with a friend.

Save yourself: If a game just seems like work rather than play, it's okay to skip that 12-hour boss fight. There's nothing saying you have to do it and most times nothing important is gained by your weeks of stress except for your buddy saying, "you did that? That's crazy..." noncommittally.

Most important of all, keep having fun! That's what games are for.

Enjoy. |ECHO

NOTICES

NEWS BRIEFS AND NOTICES**SUMMARY OF BILLS
FROM THE 2025
LEGISLATIVE SESSION**

— Reprinted from Oregon Cure,
Spring 2025, Volume 79

These are not law yet – these bills are under review at the 2025 Legislative Session. Once reviews are complete and recommendations are made, then the bills which survive will be sent to the full legislature.

SB293 | Requires the Department of Correction to provide certain medical care to adults in custody. Document the reasons for any denial or refusal of medical care to adults in custody, refrain from considering the remaining duration of incarceration for adults in custody in determining medical care, list in the Adult in Custody’s file the reason a medical service is denied and that formulary prescriptions mirror the standards of Medicare and Medicaid.

SB703 | Directs the Department of Human Services to provide grants to nonprofit service providers to assist individuals who are noncitizens to change their immigration status or obtain lawful permanent resident status.

SB938 | The bill would allow the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission to award grant funds to a statewide coalition that does not directly provide restorative justice programs but assists or supports other potential grant recipients in applying for restorative justice program grants administered by the CJC. The bill establishes the Restorative Justice Grant Program Account and continuously appropriates money for the grant program.

SB1007 | Modifies provisions

relating to petitions for compensation for wrongful conviction and increase the scope of available compensation.

SB1120 | Requires the Department of Corrections to implement a list of policies for adults in custody, including policies related to gender-responsive, evidence-based and trauma-informed practices at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

HB2233 | Directs the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission to establish a program to provide legal services to adults in custody who are servicing sentences at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

HB2405 | Appropriates money from the General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to Eastern Oregon University to provide university degrees to adults in custody at some correctional facilities in eastern Oregon.

HB2555 | Changes the name of the Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program to the Family Sentencing Alternative Program.

HB2747 | Requires the Department of Corrections to provide adults in custody at certain department institutions access to specific online educational programs.

HB3066 | Appropriates money from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections for the purpose of funding the advanced esthetics program at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

HB3118 | Requires the Department of Corrections to enter into a contract, or renegotiate an existing contract, with a third party to provide voice communications services at no cost to people confined at a Department of Corrections institution.

RULE CHANGES

— From the
Administrative Rules Program

Below is the list of status changes made to DOC administrative rules since 2/4/2026.

Proposed rules:**291-158 Trust Accounts**

Amends rule to change the term “inmate” to “AIC”; align the rules with current practices or with statutory definitions; codify current practice; clarify; update definitions or statutory references; establish guidelines for the assessment of fees to establish a trust account in accordance with ORS 421.125(2)(f); and clarify the AIC’s responsibility associated with stop payment requests.

Comment Period: Comments must be received by the Rules Office before 12:00PM (noon) on 4/24/2026.

291-203 Cost of Care

Amends rule to clarify the department’s procedure for cost of care collections for all AICs, regardless of the type of sentence being served.

Comment Period: Comments must be received by the Rules Office before 12:00PM (noon) on 4/24/2026

Temporary rules:**291-203 Cost of Care**

Amends rule to clarify the department’s procedure for cost of care collections for all AICs, regardless of the type of sentence being served.

Effective: 3/4/2026 through 6/7/2026

NOTICES

Permanent rules:**291-131 Mail**

Statutory Minor Correction to fix rule references in OAR 291-131-0030 (1)(a) to defined terms within the rules.

Effective:3/4/2026

This is why a magazine issue may be ok one month, then the next issue rejected the next month.

There is an appeal process for these magazine issues or books that are provisionally rejected by the mailroom staff and confirmed for rejection by the central administrator. As written in the CD618A "Mail Violation Notice" the appeal is sent to **the Functional Unit Manager at the facility where the violation notice was written.** This is the Superintendent at the facility, who likely has a designee responsible for mail. The Functional Unit Manager has the latitude to review the material and determine if they want to allow a magazine issue or book that violates the rule into the facility they are responsible for.

ODOC recently made changes to the mail rule to help mitigate the smuggling of drugs into facilities. **The rules regarding pictorial or written content did not change, they are the same.**

Note: Magazines change over time. Every new editor may result in differences in the magazine content. When attempts are made to "find the line" of what's ok and what's not, when boundaries are pushed to find where that line is, eventually the line is crossed. There are some magazines which previously had content that did not cross the line, but lately they have pushed across the line with what they write or the pictures they print. When that happens, more individual issues of that magazine end up being rejected. People may assume the entire magazine publication is banned when it is not.

As a customer or potential customer of a magazine, you must determine if you want to spend money on magazines that seem to be rejected regularly.

**MAGAZINES AND BOOK
REVIEWS BY MAILROOMS**

— Notice from Bryan Stephen,
Chief of Security, ODOC

Books and magazines that come through ODOC's mailrooms are each reviewed individually to determine if they meet the standards set forth in ODOC's mail rule, which can be found at OAR Chapter 291, Division 131 "MAIL (AIC)".

Under OAR 291-131-0037 8(b), "Vendors that repeatedly send prohibited content to adults in custody after multiple violation notices informing them of mail rule standards may be restricted."

Currently, there are no magazine vendors prohibited based on this criterion. What this means is you can subscribe to any magazine you'd like, but each issue of the magazine will be reviewed as it arrives at the facility. If mailroom staff determine that a specific magazine issue violates the rule, it is marked in the system as "provisionally rejected" with the suspected violation noted for review by the mail rule central administrator. When magazine issues or books are provisionally rejected, they are held at each facility mailroom until the next steps of the review are taken. The central administrator will then either confirm the rejection or will disagree and the magazine issue will not be rejected.

PREA INFORMATION

Sexual abuse and harassment are never okay. Tell Someone. GET HELP.

Call the Inspector General's Hotline:

1. Pick up a handset
2. Press *999 to leave a message

All PREA Calls are confidential.

Send a letter to the Governor:

Governor's Office, State Capitol,
Room 160, 900 Court St., Salem, OR
97301

The Oregon Department of Corrections has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse and harassment. AICs' family can report on their behalf by contacting the Inspector General's public hotline at: (877) 678-4222.

El Abuso sexual y el acoso sexual nunca son aceptables. Avisele a alguien. CONSIGA AYUDA.

Llame al Inspector General:

1. Al numero de ayuda:
2. Levante el teléfono, marque *999.

Todas las llamadas a 'PREA' son gratis y confidenciales.

También puede reportar a la oficina del Gobernador por escrito.

Governor's Office, State Capitol,
Room 160,
900 Court St.,
Salem, OR 97301

Sus amigos o familiares pueden hacer un reporte llamando a la línea del Inspector General al 877-678-4222.

PREA Advocate:

You may write the PREA advocate at:
ODOC PREA Advocate
3601 State St.,
Salem, OR 97301

PUZZLES

See how many points you can score in one word!

Scrabble Board: March/April 2026

Scrabble Basic Rules

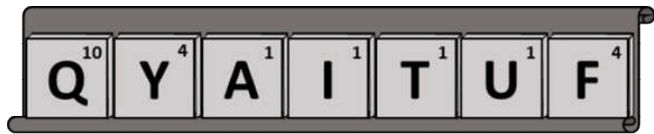
- No proper nouns like names or places
- No contractions like "it's" or "that's"
- No abbreviations like "app" or "spec"

Board Scores

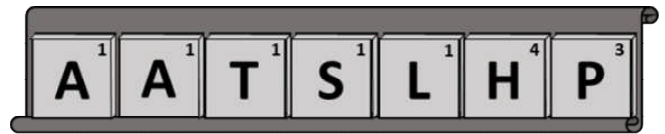
- TW = Triple Word Score
- DW = Double Word Score
- TL = Triple Letter Score
- DL = Double Letter Score

TW			DL				TW			DL			TW	
	DW				TL				TL				DW	
		DW				DL		DL				DW		
DL			DW				DL			DW			DL	
				DW						DW				
	TL				TL				TL				TL	
		DL				DL		DL				DL		
TW			M ³	A ¹	L ¹	A ¹	D ²	Y ⁴				DL		TW
		DL	A ¹					O ¹	D ²	O ¹	R ¹	O ¹	U ¹	S ¹
	TL		I ¹			TL		U ¹	TL				TL	
			N ¹	A ¹	V ⁴	E ¹	L ¹					DW		
DL			T ¹						DL				DW	DL
		DW	A ¹						DL		DL			DW
	DW		I ¹				TL			TL				DW
TW			N ¹									DL		TW

PLAYER 1



PLAYER 2



Animal Group Names Word Search from The Ultimate Brain Health Puzzle Book For Adults by Phil Fraas

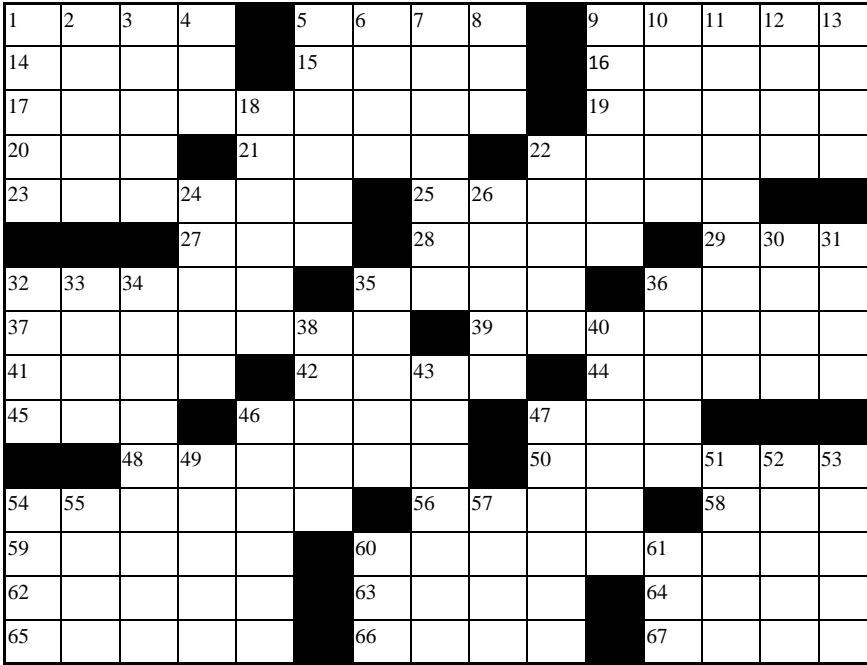
I Y N O L O C O A L I T I O N T E
 P R I D E K O B E W H N X Q B M Y
 A D E S C E N T O O D O U R B U C
 P B B L J G V H S R P I E A S R A
 E A M Z K I O T V P V T R Y O D R
 N L N U Z C C C H E S A D R U E I
 O T G D H I A U R U S T S R N R P
 R Q R G E R T C M S U L C U D D S
 D E J O A M I X M K E A O C E Y N
 L W D V O G O E C U D X L S R R O
 U U A W A P N N T L G E D L K O C
 A N B K O T P H I N U M R E W O T
 C Y Y E E L B B A U Q S D O P K O
 C K Y E V O C G E G M P T Q N E C
 E A R R A Y M R A L D P A E L R S
 T I R E D M U H T B A T T E R Y K
 E C L U T C H Y C N A N I T S B O

Only the capitalized words will be in the wordsearch

- ARMY of frogs
- CONVOCATION of eagles
- PRIDE of lions
- ARRAY of hedgehogs
- COVEY of quail
- PROWL of jaguars
- BATTERY of barracudas
- DESCENT of woodpeckers
- QUIVER of cobras
- BEVY of swans
- EMBARRASSMENT of pandas
- RHUMBA of rattlesnakes
- CACKLE of hyenas
- EXALTATION of larks
- ROOKERY of albatrosses
- CARAVAN of camels
- GAGGLE of geese
- SCOLD of jays
- CAULDRON of bats
- GANG of turkeys
- SCURRY of squirrels
- CETE of badgers
- HOST of sparrows
- SLEUTH of bears
- CLOWDER of cats
- LEAP of leopards
- SOUNDER of boars
- CLUSTER of spiders
- MURDER of crows
- SQUABBLE of seagulls
- CLUTCH of chickens
- MUSTER of storks
- THUNDER of hippopotamuses
- COALITION of cheetahs
- OBSTINACY of buffaloes
- TOWER of giraffes
- COLONY of beavers
- PANDEMONIUM of parrots
- TROOP of baboons

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Theme: Wearing Shades



From USAtoday.com

Puzzle created by: Kay Puttnam

ACROSS

- 1 Customary Observance
- 5 Aircraft representation , at times
- 9 Twice-baked breads
- 14 Portent
- 15 Type of horse
- 16 Principle of good conduct
- 17 Shore bird
- 19 Attraction at St. Peter's
- 20 Consciousness of one's own identity
- 21 Residuum
- 22 Passed, as time
- 23 Year on campus
- 25 Small stream
- 27 Goddess of abundance
- 28 Windward opposite
- 29 One cause of absence
- 32 Discernment
- 35 Talkative starling
- 36 One-sidedness
- 37 Tanks for watching
- 39 Fine-tunes, e.g.
- 41 Leaders of the mongrel hordes?
- 42 Affirmative actions
- 44 Inhalation anesthetic, once
- 45 Graceless one
- 46 Indian garment
- 47 Blubber
- 48 Russian pancakes
- 50 Least incompetent
- 54 Stir to action
- 56 Words with jail or pot
- 58 Bout outcome, in brief

- 59 Had in mind
- 60 Certain layabout
- 62 Blue-haired mom
- 63 Edvard Munch's home
- 64 Potato parts
- 65 Word with tall or short
- 66 Netherworld river
- 67 Certain singing voice

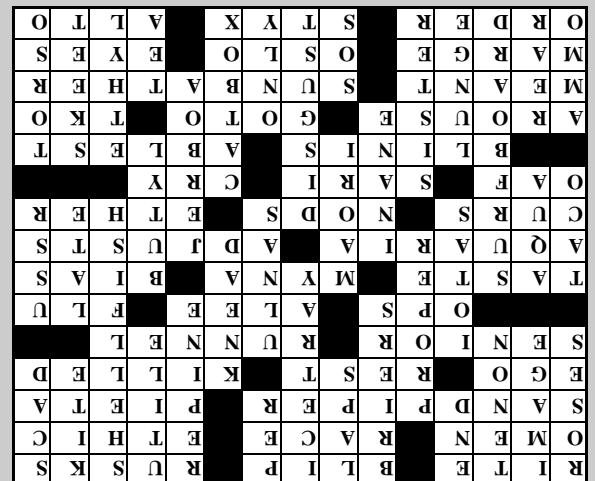
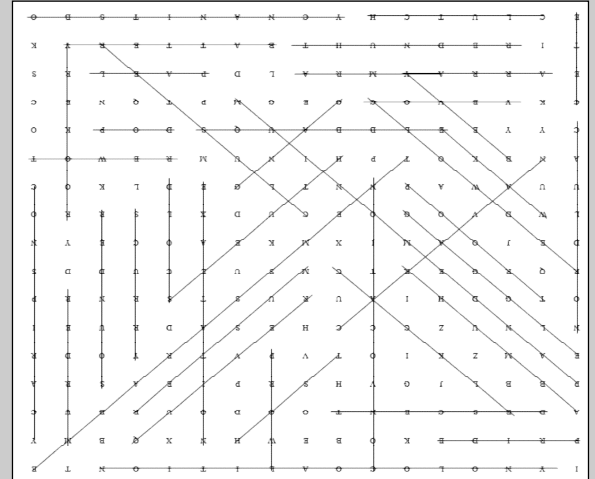
DOWN

- 1 Derby prize
- 2 Visual representation
- 3 Mortise insert
- 4 It may be bitter or loose
- 5 Masses of prickly plants
- 6 Where some babies nap
- 7 Cube holder
- 8 Each
- 9 Express discontent
- 10 Serviceable
- 11 What some are allergic to
- 12 Diamond in the sky
- 13 Large amount
- 18 Decorous
- 22 Manipulate dough
- 24 Some Greek vowels
- 26 They bear arms?
- 30 Type of edition
- 31 SALT signer
- 32 Word with shell or bell
- 33 Marine leader
- 34 Wave rider

DOWN CONTINUED

- 35 A Polynesian language
- 36 Type of rubber
- 38 Really silly
- 40 Leaping rodent
- 43 Strong revulsion
- 46 A next of kin
- 47 Feline convenience
- 49 Epeeist's attack
- 51 Kind of alcohol
- 52 Shooting game
- 53 Trunk filled with blood
- 54 Gun shop purchase, often
- 55 Duff
- 57 No more than
- 60 Help wanted notice?
- 61 Sympathy partner

ANSWER KEYS



RECIPE

CARAMEL POPCORN RECIPE

Provided by Rodney Rodriguez

Ingredients and tools:

- 1 bag of butterscotch
- 3 bags of Caramel
- 1 heaping spoon of peanut butter
- 3 bags of microwave popcorn or one bag of pre-popped heated to 190 degrees
- 2 bags of honey roasted peanuts or two handfuls of trail mix
- 2 tumblers, one with a mark 1¼ inches from the bottom
- 1 spoon
- 1 legal tote
- 1 pitcher

Step one: Peel butterscotch into the tumbler with the 1¼ mark on it and add 190-degree water to the line. Then stir until dissolved. This may take a long time but be patient.

Step two: Peel caramels into the other tumbler and add two spoons of water. Then the spoon of peanut butter. Microwave for 55 seconds until melted, then stir in the butterscotch and continue to stir until smooth. If you are using 190-degree water, put half the melted butterscotch in one sandwich bag and half in another.

Split the caramels, water and peanut butter into both the bags and tie them

up. Put those in the pitcher of 190-degree water and keep smashing every two minutes until smooth.

Step three: Pop the popcorn and sift into a legal tote. Then shake to one side to find any seeds or hard pieces. Now add the nuts or trail mix and cover everything with the melted caramel mix.

Then mix it up for at least two minutes while it's still hot.

Step four: Bag it up or eat it out of the tote.

Have a recipe you would like to share?

Contact The Echo and let us know!

NOW HIRING FOR THE ECHO

The Echo is accepting applicants for positions as a correspondent. A correspondent works Mon-Fri, hours may vary. This position starts at 11 PRAS points with the opportunity to go up to 13. Correspondents promoted to staff writer can earn 15 points.

Criteria:

- Must be NCI level 2 or 3
- Must work well with staff and AICs of many different backgrounds
- Must have an interest in learning journalism

Duties include:

- Article writing, conducting interviews and researching various topics
- Attending training sessions with outside journalists and other field experts
- Completing homework assignments on AP style writing, news article structure and grammar and punctuation
- Advancement opportunities may include photography and editing duties

To Apply:

Send a communication form (kyte) and a job application to IWP, Journalism Department. If you completed an application more than two months ago, please resubmit.



YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Help Reshape the Narrative of What It Means to be Incarcerated

One of the most challenging parts of running a prison publication is finding people to interview. Prisons are compartmentalized places and often our writers interview people who are on their unit or in their general area. We would like to expand our reach and add more voices to our articles.

If you are interested in being interviewed for an article that may appear in The Echo, 1664, with the Prison Journalism Project, the East Oregonian, or other publications, fill out this form and drop it into the kyte box. Forms are available on your unit.

We are creating a database of willing interviewees and will schedule you for a preliminary interview shortly after your form is submitted.

Here is a brief list of upcoming articles, updated March 31:

- **Delayed/absent spring and summer sports in 2026. Is the field worth replacing?**
- **Tablets for all AICs/What are your hopes and concerns?**
- **How will AI impact the job market? Should incarcerated people be looking at different jobs/trade skills because of AI?**
- **The mentor/contact officer program — is it working?**
- **Should EOCI have a running program? Would you train and run a marathon if the prison facilitated an event?**
- **The impact of Measure 11 — do long prison sentences deter crime?**
- **Health care/aging in prison — what’s it like to age in prison? What do you want people outside of prison to know?**
- **Lost in the letters/LGBTQ+ community and unfair stigmas**

And more...

Updated March 31, 2026

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NAME: _____

SID: _____

BUNK: _____

Best time for an interview (check boxes that apply)

What day(s)?

Any day Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri

What time(s)?

Any hour 8-9 a.m. 9-10 a.m. 10-11 a.m. 1-2 p.m. 2-3 p.m. 3-4 p.m.

Upcoming articles (check any you are interested in)

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Canceled sports in spring and summer: What do you think about replacing the east and west fields at EOCI?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Tablets for all AICs: What are your hopes and concerns with the department issuing tablets to all AICs?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> AI and the job market: How will AI impact the job market? Should incarcerated people look at different jobs/trade skills because of AI?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mentor/contact team program: Is the mentor program working? What is working well and what do you think could be better?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Impact of Measure 11: Do long prison sentences prevent crime?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Running at EOCI: Should the facility have a running/jogging program? How would a running program help you? Would you train to run a marathon if the prison sponsored an event?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Health Care: How have your health care needs been addressed in prison? Have your needs changed as you have gotten older?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Surviving Cancer in Prison: Have you had cancer or another serious illness? What was it like to go through treatment while incarcerated?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Lost in the Letters: Are you a part of the LGBTQ+ community and would like to talk about your experiences? What is it like to navigate unfair stigmas? What do you want people to know?</p>
--	--

You will be scheduled for a preliminary interview within a few weeks of turning in this form.

**Forms are available
on your housing unit
or by contacting
IWP: Journalism Department.**

**New topics and potential
articles are added each quarter.**

THE ECHO, VOLUME IX - ISSUE 89, MARCH/APRIL 2026

www.pollenpress.org/the-echo/

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution

2500 Westgate

Pendleton, OR

97801

WHERE TO FIND THE ECHO AND 1664

ON EDOVO

The Echo and 1664 can be found on the Edovo application.

Readers can find the publications by typing “The Echo” or “1664” into the search bar.

ONLINE

Readers outside the correctional setting can find The Echo and 1664 at www.pollenpress.org or on the Oregon Department of Correction’s webpage under the newsletter directory. Check out www.pollenpress.org/the-echo/



Scanning the QR code will take readers to the ODOC directory of newsletters where The Echo and 1664 are available.

ON UNITS

Print copies of The Echo is available on housing units at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. 1664 is available in limited quantities at select locations.

For EOICI, each housing unit has a magazine rack dedicated for The Echo and 1664.

ON TABLETS

The Echo and 1664 can be found in the free section on tablets under “notices.”

The Echo is available at EOICI. 1664 is available at all Oregon prisons.



The Pollen Initiative is dedicated to cultivating media centers inside prisons to shed light on the justice system. Through hands-on multimedia training, as well as leadership programs that facilitate personal growth and transferable skills, our team contributes to more balanced narratives about incarceration.

We support existing prison newsrooms, like the historic San Quentin News, and emerging newsrooms and media projects across the country.

HOW TO DONATE

Support The Echo and 1664 by making a donation to Pollen Initiative.

Donations can be made at www.polleninitiative.org.

Pollen Initiative, EIN 9202619177, is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, and your donation is tax deductible within the guidelines of U.S. law. Please keep your receipt as your official record. We'll email it to you upon successful completion of your donation.