

THE RADICAL RECONCILIATION TOUR

Two Men Connected by Tragedy Inspire Hope

Written by Kurtis Thompson



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Carlos Colon and Nelson Vargas speak to a gathering of incarcerated people in EOCI's chapel on Oct. 30, 2025. Colon served a 20-year prison sentence for killing Vargas' son. But Vargas forgave Colon, and now the men, who consider each other family, visit prisons to spread a message of hope and forgiveness.

"I still cringe when I hear or say I murdered Nelson's son, and I'm next to him," Carlos Colon said.

Colon shot and killed Nelson Vargas' son, Nelson Jr., in a gang-related incident. Decades later, the two men

give testimonies of their lives and reconciliation at church gatherings. In the afternoon of Oct. 30, Colon and Vargas visited Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution to speak to 31 residents at the Visions of Hope service.

See *FORGIVENESS* page 4

A MUCH-NEEDED RENOVATION

EOCI's Greenhouse Gets More Than \$10,000 in Renovations

Written by Chris Ainsworth

There is a greenhouse next to Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution's multipurpose building, where lights shine through its clear sides every night. It has not had any renovations since 1984, when the facility transitioned into a prison. But a major overhaul project was started in September to improve the building's efficiency.

Multiple renovations are already completed and others are scheduled. They include new siding, an industrial sink and new plumbing, heating and cooling upgrades, a new vermiculture system and new breaker box. In the future, improvements to the HVAC system and grow lights will be added.

The renovations will improve the effectiveness of the greenhouse. The workers are responsible for sowing vegetable starts that are planted around the compound each year.

In spring, the greenhouse holds around 15,000 starts.

See *RENOVATIONS* page 6



IN OREGON

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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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INFORMATIONAL HEARING HELD ON VOTING RIGHTS FOR INCARCERATED PEOPLE

The House Interim Committee on Rules held an informational hearing on Nov. 17. The committee reviewed potential legislation that would allow incarcerated people in Oregon to vote during their incarceration.

Oregon is one of many states that denies the right to vote during a person's incarceration, but restores the right after a person exits prison.

In an Oregon Department of Corrections communication, officials cited concerns and "logistical and policy implications" that the department had brought to the attention of legislators, but was not addressed.

Concerns from ODOC included: use of SID numbers on election materials, jury summons for incarcerated people, identifying last address for voter registration, ballot routing and identity conflicts, and ballot assistance needs.

The communication said, "There are many AICs incapable of completing a ballot on their own," but did not state why an incarcerated person would be incapable of completing a ballot.

About 93% of incarcerated people in Oregon have a release date and will be eligible to vote upon release. There are no capacity or literacy tests to be eligible to vote.

Voting laws vary by state, but voting while incarcerated is not new. Two states, Maine and Vermont, allow incarcerated people to vote.

Some states, such as Mississippi, deny the vote to people with felon records even after they exit the prison system.

The legislators and supporters of enfranchisement intend to introduce a voting rights bill in 2026. | **ECHO**

INCARCERATED ACTORS SHARE THEIR STORY ON OPB'S THINK OUT LOUD

Two adults in custody at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility recently joined Oregon Public Broadcasting's show, Think Out Loud, to discuss their roles in Elektra, the newest production from the Northwest Classical Theatre Collaborative and Coffee Creek Theatre.

The interview offered a candid look at what it means to step into a creative space inside a correctional environment, where vulnerability, trust, and personal growth take on new meaning.

This year's project marks the first time that women at CCCF selected the play themselves, choosing Elektra after

weeks of reading and discussion that began in March. Rehearsals followed in May, with performances scheduled for both adults in custody and approved outside guests in late November.

During the interview, cast members reflected on how the program has helped them build confidence, strengthen communication skills, and find purpose through artistic expression. Their insights highlight the impact of theater as a tool for healing and empowerment, and the value of community partnerships.

For readers with internet access, [listen to the interview here.](#) | **ECHO**



GROWING HOPE, PURPOSE AND SECOND CHANCES

The Greenhouse Now Has Two Citrus Producing Trees

Written by Chris Ainsworth

Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

On Nov. 13, 2025, a dwarf Meyer lemon tree sits in its own planter box at the EOCI greenhouse. Behind the lemon tree is an orange tree that was previously donated.

A marginalized community at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution saw its population double on Nov. 13. Staff escorted the facility's first lemon tree through the front door before it was delivered to the greenhouse. The unrecognizable plant joined an orange tree as the second citrus tree in the institution.

Umatilla County Emergency Manager Sage DeLong donated the dwarf Meyer lemon tree to the EOCI green-

house. The sapling arrived a few weeks after a quarterly prison advisory committee meeting DeLong attended at the facility.

"I truly believe that greenhouse grows more than vegetables and fruit," DeLong said. "It grows hope, purpose and second chances."

The donation was made following a presentation by gardening program facilitator Brett Lloyd on the facility's

2025 harvest.

The lemon tree will spend its first two years establishing itself, with fruit production expected in 2027.

"I thought of the taste of a fresh lemon," said DeLong, of why he donated. "Something bright and simple that might bring a moment of light into a place where people are working hard to find their own path forward."

Dwarf Meyer lemon trees reach between four to five feet when fully grown and produce full-sized fruit. The fruit has a sweetness not usually found in lemons because it's a hybrid, mixing attributes of a lemon and orange.

"Our orange tree produced its first fruit this year. The fruit was the size of a golf ball, and delicious," Lloyd said. "I have never grown a lemon tree before, so I'm excited to see how much it produces."

Dwarf Meyer lemon trees originated in China and were brought to the United States in 1908 by Frank Meyer, but their introduction did not go well.

The trees were carriers of a disease deadly to citrus orchards; the Citrus Tristeza virus. The virus led to the eradication of Meyer lemon trees in the United States until a virus free variant emerged. | **ECHO**

ADVERTISEMENT

Opportunity Oregon

**Opportunity Oregon will be holding a workshop at EOCI on Dec. 8.
To attend, contact S. Robson at Transition Services before Dec. 3.**

Opportunity Oregon is program that helps pair incarcerated people with job interviews upon release. They assist formerly incarcerated people through education, job training and job placement assistance. The organization provides employment opportunities to individuals who have been released and are looking to rebuild their lives outside prison walls. Opportunity Oregon partners with dozens of felon-friendly employers and services throughout Oregon.

AROUND EOCI

FORGIVENESS continued from page 1

Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Nelson Vargas speaks at the rostrum on Oct. 30, 2025 to more than 30 residents of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. Vargas and Carlos Colon tour correctional facilities sharing their story of forgiveness and compassion with incarcerated people.

Vargas was a drug dealer in Chicago. He had multiple drug houses and a steady flow of users. But he wasn't the only one leading the operation—his son Nelson Jr. was part of it as well.

"I told my son that we were going to run Chicago," Vargas said. "I thought I was doing the right thing by my son by providing for him ... it hurts me to say I had my son dealing drugs for me."

From Dealer to User to Believer

Their drug business was lucrative, but Vargas began using and quickly became addicted.

"I got real sick," he said. "I became a junkie. And my son was like, 'Dad, I'm going to take care of us. You just keep bringing in the drugs and I'll keep dealing them.'"

Around that time, Vargas met a

woman named Yvonne. He was originally planning to use her by turning her home into another drug house.

"I was going to use her, because that's what we gangsters do is use people," he said.

But after a near-death experience, Vargas said he became a Christian and changed his life. He left the drug and gangster business – but Nelson Jr. did not.

Crossing Paths

Carlos Colon was in a small Chicago gang in the 90s, regularly fighting over territory. Colon said he crossed paths with Nelson Jr. multiple times before they became a threat to each other.

"I remember as a kid, walking through the neighborhood and seeing Nelson," he said. "In high school, we

were just getting into gangs, having run-ins ... every time we see each other, we don't like each other."

Both were involved in gang-related revenge shootings. One day, Nelson Jr. was a driver when others in his car shot and wounded Colon. He saw Nelson Jr. again not long after.

"I remember I was still healing. I was with my girlfriend, and I'm in the middle of the street walking, and a car comes," he said. "And

[Nelson Jr.] was driving with his girl, and he looks at me and he's laughing ... and I said, 'One day, I'm going to kill him.'"

At the time, the gang leaders had called a ceasefire. But Colon wanted revenge. He shot and killed Nelson Jr.

Five Times

Vargas had seen his son one last time before the shooting. Nelson Jr. had asked his father for material to cut drugs, but Vargas refused.

"No, I'm not going to do that," Vargas said to his son that night. "I was a bad father, a bad person. Now I want to be a good father, and if you can't respect that then just leave and don't come over here no more."

Hours later, while Vargas was at church, the chapel door opened.

Yvonne was there, crying in slippers and robe.

"I asked her what was going on, and she said they just killed Nelson," he said. "They shot him five times."

Vargas said he looked back at the cross in the chapel and began yelling "Jesus." The church members supported and cried with them into the night, he said.

20 Years and Reconciliation

At first, Vargas tried to avoid thinking of his son's killer. But 10 years later, while Colon was serving a 20-year prison sentence for the crime, Vargas received a phone call.

"I get a call from [the prison] and they say, 'Hey, the guy who killed your son is here. What do you want me to do?' and I said, 'Don't do anything! I'm a man of God.'"

Years later, after giving his testimony at a prison church service, Vargas met with Koinonia's ministry coordinator, Pastor Nephtali Matta, at his home.

As they were eating dinner, Matta asked Vargas how he felt about Colon. He said he had forgiven him. Vargas said Matta sighed with relief.

"Then he told me, 'By the way, he was there when you gave your testimony. He wanted to ask you for forgiveness, but felt too ashamed to approach you. He asked to meet with you and your family,'" Vargas said.

A few months after Colon was released from prison, the Vargas family met him at Midwest Bible Church in Chicago.

"As we entered the office, I expected to see a rough, tired-looking man," Vargas said. "Instead, I saw a scared, nervous, humble, God-fearing man."

After a brief moment of immobility, Vargas forgave Colon and embraced him.

"I walked over to [Colon] and hugged him as if he were my son," he said. "We cried so hard. He asked me to forgive him and said that he was so sorry. I was able to look him in the eyes and say, 'I forgive you.'"

Back in the Chapel

Vargas stood in the EOCI chapel as he told his story, punctuating the air as he spoke.

"When you forgive somebody, not only do you release them, you release yourself," he said.

When Colon looks at Vargas he sees Nelson Jr.—a humbling reminder of the grace he received.

"It's a blessing," Colon said, "because I don't deserve this."

But the forgiveness was more than mere words.

When Colon and his wife renewed

their wedding vows, Vargas officiated the ceremony. Vargas had become the pastor of the same church he first attended "as a junkie," he said. He was also there when Colon's son was born.

"He's held my son," said Colon. "He held him when he was born."

After the EOCI event, residents Luke Andrade and Joseph Rife said they felt compelled to forgive. Andrade said it is his fault he is in prison, but his daughter's mother has not allowed him to be in contact with their child.

"But this guy lost a son, and he still forgave," he said. "It makes me think I can forgive her."

Rife believes if Vargas and Colon can reconcile, anyone can.

"It inspired me to look over my past and consider the people who've wronged me, and forgive them," Rife said. "If he can forgive that, anything less should be forgivable, too."

Andrade added he believes if others listen to Vargas and Colon's story, they will be inspired to forgive as well. | **ECHO**



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

"I was able to look him in the eyes and say, 'I forgive you,'" said Nelson Vargas, standing right, of his first conversation with Carlos Colon, sitting center. Colon took the life of Vargas' son and served 20 years in prison. Now, the pair visit prisons sharing their story.

AROUND EOCI

RENOVATIONS continued from page 1

Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Brett Lloyd, left, and Zach Schrader install new siding to Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution's greenhouse in Fall. The greenhouse has had more than \$10,000 in renovations in 2025.

The Replacements

A small part of the project began in 2024 when some of the polycarbonate siding, known as glazing, was replaced. The biggest part of the renovations, however, began in September.

Paint shop and greenhouse workers replaced the remaining glazing except for two small sections. The greenhouse is waiting for old wood framing to be replaced. Once the wood is replaced, the remaining glazing will be installed. These repairs, however, will have to happen after winter when the weather warms, because when the siding is removed it exposes the interior of the greenhouse to outside temperatures.

EOCI's plumbing shop also made renovations. The plumbers removed a greenhouse bathroom and installed a large stainless-steel industrial sink. The installation required rerouting and converting previous lines to ensure the newly installed fixtures functioned properly.

"They had two bathrooms and one wasn't being used," said plumbing shop worker Brian Hardegger. "We took one out and converted it into a washroom area to wash fruits and vegetables."

Additionally, the plumbers worked on the air-cooling system.

The greenhouse cooling system is similar to a swamp cooler. Cold water is pumped from a reservoir and trickles down treated cardboard, or media board. A giant fan blows cool air off the media board into the greenhouse.

The old media board was replaced and a new fan installed. The plumbing shop added a new pump and replumbed the entire system. The water now flows better, making cooling in the summer months more efficient.

"All the plumbing there was fine. We just added onto it for the drain and sink," Hardegger said. "This is the same kind of work you would do when

remodeling a house."

Another upgrade the greenhouse hopes to receive is to the vermiculture system. Vermiculture is the practice of raising worms for use in garden beds and composting. Greenhouse workers said they hope the new bin will lead to more worm compost in the future.

The new system will not require as much cleaning and watering, improving overall efficiency. Workers will not have to dig through worm excrement as often because the system is less hands-on. The improved efficiency means greenhouse workers can spend less time micro-managing the system.

"Personally, the upgrades make me feel relieved. We have been hoping to get upgrades to improve our efficiency," said greenhouse worker and grounds crew trainer Joe Tuttle. "We will be able to do more for the institution."

Future Upgrades

Vents in the greenhouse, called dampers, are used to adjust the exchange of inside and outside air. The metal flaps must be open and closed manually. But when nobody is in the greenhouse, temperatures cannot be managed.

To solve this problem, an automated system has been ordered. When the greenhouse becomes too hot, the system will activate fans and open the vents to cool the greenhouse.

When the new system arrives, the facility's HVAC shop will be responsible for installation.

Every department in EOCI's physical plant assisted or will assist in the greenhouse overhaul.



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Luis Rodriguez, an incarcerated plumber, moves a toilet. The greenhouse had two bathrooms. Rodriguez and the plumbing shop converted one into a washroom.

Oregon Department of Corrections Headquarters Gets Involved

Sustainability projects would normally be overseen by a sustainability program manager, but that position is currently open. Michael Burke, business manager of facility services for the ODOC, is temporarily overseeing the greenhouse upgrades.

According to Burke, ODOC's sustainability goals are built around four cornerstones: energy conservation and greenhouse gas reduction; waste management; soil and water conservation; and people, partnerships, programs, procurement and policies. Burke said the first three cornerstones set the benchmark for each category, and the fourth explains how the agency will act to meet each benchmark.

"By renovating the EOCI greenhouse, I hope it will inspire EOCI to establish a robust greenhouse program," said Burke. "Greenhouses offer numerous benefits to individuals, the agency and the community. I firmly believe the financial benefits associated

with operating a robust greenhouse outweigh the costs."

So far, around \$11,000 has been invested in renovations.

"The key takeaways are the benefits not related to the cost or cost savings,"

Burke said. "Benefits include, but aren't limited to, therapeutic and rehabilitative, skill development and vocational training, positive facility culture, alignment with sustainability goals and workforce development."

Burke said that during 2022, the greenhouse and nursery sectors were the highest agricultural industry in Oregon, valued at more than \$1.22 billion. It is an expanding industry which can provide job opportunities for individuals with skills, experience and education.

He would like to see courses such as greenhouse management, plant taxonomy and pesticide management become standard requirements for institutions with greenhouses. He believes these courses will ensure greenhouse operators are properly trained and greenhouse benefits are maximized.

"All of this is part of the sustainability five-year plan that is under development," said Burke. "The plan will contain short- and long-term goals for each benchmark which will include many aspects of gardening." | **ECHO**



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

New siding is added to the greenhouse in October, which was part of the in renovations made since the end of summer.

AROUND EOCI

GARDEN PLOTS YIELD 10 TONS OF PRODUCE

Grounds Crew Workers and Gardeners Help Supplement Food Made at EOCI

Written by Logan Gimbel



A plant start growing in the EOCI greenhouse.

The Echo/Stock, photo by Phillip Luna

The gardening program at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution delivered more than 39,000 pounds of produce to the Food Services Department in 2023, more than 2024 and 2025 combined. Zucchini, however, accounted for over 60% of the weight. The yields this year may have been less, but residents were able to enjoy a wider variety of produce.

“In 2023, we almost exclusively grew squash and zucchini,” said Brett Lloyd, an incarcerated person who is responsible for overseeing the greenhouse and managing garden plots.

A Wider Variety

In 2024, the gardening program delivered just under 7,000 pounds of produce. The low return was mainly due to roofing construction at the facility,

which limited access to most of the plots. Lloyd used the available space to experiment with which plants grew best in the local climate and soil. He learned that various types of squash, cucumbers, tomatoes and zucchini thrive here at EOCI.

In 2025, partly due to gardeners having access to more plots and Lloyd’s experiments, more than 20,000 pounds of produce were provided to food services. Thirteen separate vegetables were grown, including a variety of vegetables Lloyd had experimented with.

“Not many people would be excited about just zucchini and squash,” said Lloyd.

Each year, residents attending the Seed to Supper class assist in garden plot management. The six-week pro-

gram, which had 16 students this year, teaches the basics of managing a vegetable garden.

Once students finish the class, they are automatically enrolled in the Master Gardener course provided by Oregon State University.

Managing the Plots

Weeding EOCI’s 52,000 square feet of garden spread out across 16 separate plots is daunting. Typically, it would take Lloyd and his team of gardeners days to weed a single plot. If left unattended, weeds will quickly overrun a plot, competing with the produce-bearing plants. However, the EOCI grounds crew assists in weed management, allowing the gardeners to focus on the plants.

This year, the volunteer harvest crew had 30 participants. Fifteen residents worked on the west side of the institution and 15 on the east. Previously, the gardening team was not able to harvest all of the vegetables quickly enough, leaving many to rot on the vine.

Volunteers are needed every year for the harvest crew. Interested residents may contact Institution Work Programs to participate.

Also, Lloyd and his gardeners implemented various practices, such as composting, crop rotation and raised plant beds, to improve plot and soil quality.

The gardeners even encouraged the local bees to help by planting pollinator-friendly flowers near the vegetables.

Now that facility construction is completed, the sustainable gardening program will have access to 7,300 square feet of soil that was previously blocked. With the additional space, Lloyd is hoping to produce more 30,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables in 2026.

“Next year I am looking forward to growing different varieties of tomatoes,” said Lloyd. “Indigo blue chocolate, queen of the night and black beauty tomatoes.”

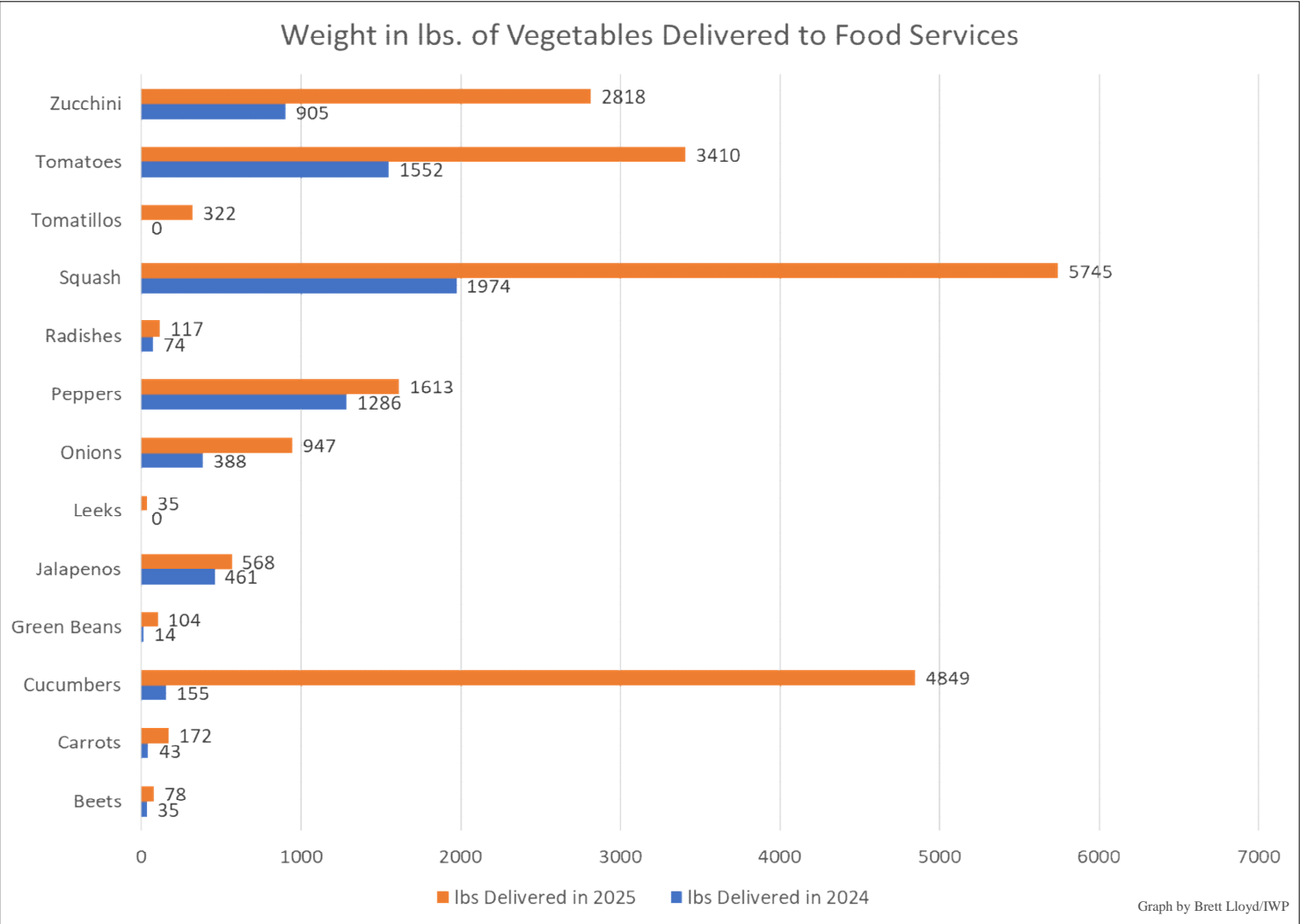
In addition to the different tomato varieties, Lloyd is planning on planting more melons, jalapeños, New Mexico chiles and leeks. Residents of EOCI can look forward to a variety of fresh vegetables in the summer of 2026.

ECHO



Photo by Phillip LunaThe Echo

A large bag of tomatoes sits on a cart waiting to be delivered to the Food Services Department in summer. The EOCI grounds yielded a half dozen bags of vegetables every other day for most of the harvesting season.



RECIPES

HOLIDAY RECIPES

from the Grinch

Caramel Popcorn Balls

Ingredients:

- 3 bags of caramels
- 1 bag of pre-cooked popcorn or 2 microwave bags
- 3 tablespoons of butter
- 1 bag of M&M's
- 1 bag of honey-roasted peanuts

First, make butter caramel sauce: cut caramels into quarters and place in an empty peanut butter container. Add butter, close the container and place it in a pitcher of hot water. Replace water every 15 minutes and stir the caramels each time. This should be done 2-3 times until caramels are made into a sauce which is thick like cooled pancake syrup. If the sauce is too thick, add water. If it is too thin, add creamer.

To assemble product, pour the popcorn, M&Ms and nuts into a small plastic bag and shake well. Next, slowly pour the caramel in bag while shaking it. Work the popcorn around to make sure every kernel is covered with the caramel sauce. Out of this mixture, form softball-sized balls and compact them. *Share if you must, but take their socks as tribute.*

Ice Cream Bomb

Ingredients:

- 1 pint of ice cream
- 1 bag of caramels

- 1 Hershey dark chocolate candy bar
- 1 bag of honey-roasted peanuts
- 1 tablespoon of honey

First, make butter caramel sauce: cut caramels into quarters and place in an empty peanut butter container. Add honey, close the container and place it in a pitcher of hot water. Replace water every 15 minutes and stir the caramels each time. This should be done 2-3 times until caramels are made into a sauce slightly thicker than pancake syrup. If the sauce is too thick, add water. If it is too thin, add creamer.

Place a ¼ of ice cream into a tumbler. Add ¼ of the nuts, chocolate and caramel sauce into the tumbler. The chocolate can be melted or chunked. Repeat three more times or until the ingredients are gone. *Now eat as others watch – then laugh at them.*

Cadillac Christmas Coffee

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons of coffee
- 2 peppermint hard candies (crushed)
- 5 sugar cubes
- 2 tablespoons of dry creamer
- 4 tablespoons of cocoa mix
- 16 ounces of hot water (190 degree)

Crush the peppermint candies into tiny pieces and place them and all other dry ingredients into a coffee mug. Add

about half the hot water and stir ingredients until dissolved. Add the remainder of hot water to the mug. *I feed this to Max before he pulls my sled. He is a stupidly loyal mutt.*

Peanut Butter Fudge

Ingredients:

- 70 sugar cubes
- 2-3 tablespoons of water
- 1 bag of caramels
- 1 jar of peanut butter

Place the sugar cubes into a cup with 2-3 tablespoons of water. Place cup in a microwave for one-minute intervals, stirring between heating, until the sugar is dissolved and liquid is clear. Next, add caramels to the liquid and microwave for about a minute and a half. Remove and stir until contents are a smooth, syrupy texture. While contents are still hot, pour into a bowl and add the jar of peanut butter. Stir until completely mixed.

Finally, place the bowl of fudge on ice for at least a couple hours or until solidified. *Warning: if you share this, people may want to invade your life with friendship. Gross.*

Hot Reese's

Ingredients:

- 4 heaping tablespoons of cocoa mix

1 heaping tablespoon of peanut butter
5 sugar cubes
16 ounces of hot water

In a large mug, put the cocoa, peanut butter and sugar. Fill the mug with hot water and stir until fully mixed. Add caramel syrup for an extra sugary kick. *This is my preferred pre-workout shake I drink before hurling snowballs and insults at the village below my home.*

Chocolate Balls

Ingredients:

1 jar of melted peanut butter
1 container of honey
12 Hershey candy bars
8 bags of unsalted peanuts

In a large bowl, combine peanuts, peanut butter and honey. Take small portions and roll them into bite sized balls. Melt the Hershey candy bars into another bowl. Roll the balls in chocolate and set aside to dry overnight. *Max got into these once. I warn you, do not – and I mean do not ever – leave your mutt home alone with these chocolate treats. The mess was horrible, even for a grinch.*

Cinnamon Rolls

Ingredients:

1 sleeve of vanilla cookies
½ pound of oatmeal
6 packs of maple/brown sugar oatmeal
40 sugar cubes
9 packets of substitute sweeteners

3 packets of cream cheese
1 tablespoon of cinnamon
1 cup of hot water
4 tablespoons of hot water

Mix ½ pound of oatmeal with three packs of maple and brown sugar oatmeal, 10 sugar cubes and three substitute sweeteners. Remove the filling from the vanilla cookies and crush the cookie halves and oatmeal together into a powder. Mix 1 cup of hot water with them and knead them into a dough.

In a separate bowl, crush the remaining packs of maple and brown sugar and mix in 20 sugar cubes and three sweeteners. Add four tablespoons of hot water and mix thoroughly.

Roll the dough flat to the preferred thickness. Let it sit for about five minutes to slightly harden. Spread the wet brown sugar mix over the top. Slowly but tightly roll up the cinnamon roll and let sit for a while before cutting.

Mix three cream cheese packets with

10 sugar cubes and apply the mixture over the top of the cinnamon rolls. *This delectable dish was so good I nearly smiled. That was a close one! I never made it again.*

Chocolate Fudge

Ingredients:

5 Hershey candy bars
4 tablespoons of butter
64 sugar cubes or packets

Melt the candy bars in their wrappers. Melt the butter at the same time. Once they are both done, mix them together. Add the sugar, mix well and pour into a bowl or smaller container to set up. Probably the easiest recipe ever. *If you lack the patience to make it, just give me the ingredients. What? No, I'm not going to make it for you, I just want the ingredients.*



HOLIDAY SEASON

Incarcerated People in EOCI's Disciplinary Segregation Unit Share Their Favorite Holiday Memories

"When I was 15 I had a Charlotte Hornets jersey and me and my sister got a Nintendo 64 with the game Star Fox. We played that game for a week straight."

- James Morgan



"Waking up on Christmas Eve and my mom letting me and my sister open one gift. Mom always made sure we had plenty."

- Michael Snyder



"I have four beautiful girls and two handsome boys. 2012 was the last Christmas I spent with them. My wife and I did everything to make presents appear under the tree. And sure, some of those gift weren't bought properly. But I would be damned if I didn't need to see all their little faces light up on Christmas morning—yelling, laughing, tearing open all those gifts from Santa, mom and dad."

- Victor Duenaz

"Being with my whole family as a kid and playing in the snow."

- Allen Pitts



"Setting up and decorating the Christmas tree with my family and son. Watching my son open his presents and seeing the reaction on his face."

- Gerardo Lopez

ABOUT THE SEGREGATION UNIT

By Phillip Luna, Brian Daniel Bement and Logan Gimbel

A cell in the disciplinary segregation unit is an eight-by-ten foot concrete box with a thin, lumpy mattress on a concrete block.

The reflective light from fluorescent bulbs projects on the polished concrete floor, creating the ambience of a warehouse.

The ceiling has stalagmites of wet paper. In the corner of the cell is an industrial stainless-steel toilet and sink.

The only view of freedom is a small window in the center of steel door and a narrow, frosted window to the outside.

Residents generally have an hour each day outside their cell, in a caged, outdoor area.

For EOCI, segregation cells are usually single occupant, but pending good behavior, residents can move to a double occupancy cell.

SHARING HOLIDAY GIFTS

In segregation, it can be more difficult to celebrate and connect with other incarcerated people, but some residents still pass gifts, although illegally, by a practice called "fishing."

Fishing is common on isolation units. Residents mix paper and other products to make a string. Once the paper is dry, they twist strings together, similar to making rope.

“During Christmas 2023, me and my fiancée were celebrating and had gotten gifts for each other. She wrapped a hoodie that she stole from me years ago and cologne I thought I had lost. I had gotten some takeout and a necklace that said I love you in different languages.”

- Juan Raul Medina



“My favorite memory is being on mainline and being able to receive all this mail and love from people that I thought forgot about me.”

- Jacobi Thornsberry



“My favorite memory was 2024 New Year’s Eve in segregation at TRCI. The whole tier sang songs and came up with at least one thing we wished to bring back from the early 2000’s, whether that was someone who passed or some type of fashion. Since age 19, I spent every holiday in seg and no matter what I made the best of it.”

- Travon Jackson



“My favorite holiday memory is waking my kids up to see the look on their faces when they opened up their presents. The happiness it creates warms my soul.”

- Robert Brown

The “fishing pole” is slid under the bottom of the door, and then cast down the tier to a neighboring cell with an item attached to the end of the pole.

Gifts are passed by fishing during the holiday season, as long as they are flat enough to fit between the bottom of the door and the floor.

Cards, art and origami are commonly passed items, but some residents make food, flattened just enough to be shipped. Residents will flatten cookies, cakes or other items to share with their neighbors.

THE IMPACT OF ISOLATION

“The isolation, sensory deprivation and lack of social interaction in segregation can cause a host of psychiatric symptoms,” said correctional counselor Zhu, “with effects being observed after just a few weeks.”

Zhu works directly with the segregation housing unit.

Because of the impact being isolated has on mental health, the ODOC has made changes to their practice in recent years.

Zhu said the department has reduced sanctions by half, working towards alternative solutions instead of isolation time.

In addition, Zhu said EOCI began offering group classes and programs, such as Getting Out by Going In and Roots of Success, while people are in isolation for disciplinary reasons.

But despite the recent improvements, segregated housing can exacerbate the challenges incarcerated people already experience in prison.

(continued on next page...)

HOLIDAY SEASON

(...continued from previous page)

“Getting out of Youth Authority. Being able to hug my moms and siblings, and bringing in the new year with my lady ... Being in prison during the holidays is bad in itself, but at least you can get video visits and phone calls. There is none of that in segregation. The sense of loneliness is elevated to a new level.”

- Jalen Whitehurst

“Being with the family, cooking and baking. I am a big eater. Burning the Yule log. I’m normally alone here in Oregon. More so in seg. I miss the smell of the fire and cocoa and coffee right from the kettle.”

- Deryk Johnson



“Just spending time with loved ones ... Serving time in segregation during the holidays is hard if you have family, kids, a spouse. We do our best to stay connected.”

- Jeray Poneleges

“My favorite memories are times I can help someone.”

- O’Rion Storm Mears



“Most holidays were the best time in my life due to it being one of the rare times my family came together and actually enjoyed each other’s company.”

- Shawn Conte

*(...continued from previous page)***CHANGES TO TRAINING**

Security staff have adjusted their training model to focus on trauma-informed care.

John Taber, Administrator for the Professional Development Unit for ODOC, said the department has moved away from the one-size-fits-all approach for accountability.

“I never saw an AIC’s mental health or their behavior improve with a long stay in segregation,” said Taber. “We

saw some people finally break and give up, but that is not improvement.”

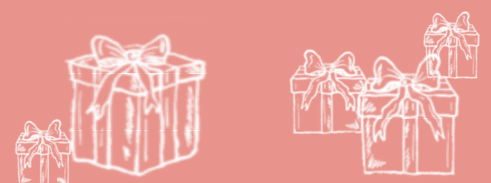
Taber said in the last decade the department has focused on crisis intervention concepts.

He said that the Memphis Model, which Oregon prisons now employ, is the gold standard of crisis intervention.

The Memphis Model was developed in 1988 by the Memphis Police Department and its primary goals are to de-escalate crises, ensure safety for everyone involved and to divert individuals

from the criminal justice system to mental health treatment.

Taber said the staff have been trained to recognize changes in behavior, energy levels, cognition or other factors to better identify people who may be in crisis. The staff are trained to focus on behavior as opposed to focusing on diagnosis. | **ECHO**



4 WAYS TO CONNECT ON THE HOLIDAYS

By Brian Daniel Bement



Shutterstock/Apichatn

‘Tis the season for creative communication. At Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, some residents go outside the gift-wrapped box to show their loved ones they care. Here are four unique ways some of them have reached out through mail.

Mailing Items or Snacks

The most popular mail-out items are: homemade taffy, cereal marshmallow bars, no-bake treats, cheese cake, Gracey cherry sours, Sour Patch Kids, M&M’s, Rice Krispies treats, Trail Mix PB dark chocolate, Russell basketball shorts and Sony headphones.

Mike Epperson, an incarcerated person at EOCI, said last year he bought gummy worms, skittles and fruit snacks for his family and daughter.

“She was thrilled when she received a present from Dad,” said Epperson.

This year, he is planning to send cinnamon bears, butter toffee peanuts and Bugles cinnamon toast crunch from holiday canteen home to his daughter for Christmas.

Residents can send commissary home for the holidays by contacting R&D to be scheduled for a mail-out. Residents must purchase a flat-rate box slip from canteen and bring it to R&D.

Mailing Religious Items

Religious items can be ordered through the chaplain. Residents can order a variety of items to surprise loved ones for the holidays. The most popular among the religious items are: medicine bags, silver chains, tarot cards, prayer rugs and oils such as peppermint, myrrh and lavender.

Roy Jones said he bought a necklace and oils for his mom six years ago.

“I sent it to her as a present and she still wears it,” said Jones.

Jones said the gifts took months to plan but it was well worth bringing joy to his mother. Residents interested in purchasing these items can contact the chapel to view a religious item catalog. There is a specific process to purchase religious items, including a package authorization form and CD-28.

Mailing Origami or Paper Craft

If a person has ever folded a paper airplane, they have made origami. Many creations, such as the four-petaled lily, heart, dragons and others can be folded flat enough to send in a regular envelope.

Origami instruction books with paper can be ordered if the book meets specific criteria. There must be instructions along with the folding paper, and they must all be part of the binding.

Two books approved at EOCI include Origami Kaleidoscope paper pack book ISBN 978-0-8048-5330-9 and The Ultimate Origami Book ISBN 978-1-4971-0125-8.

Residents may also check out origami books from the library. Those interested can contact the library for more information.

Mailing Money

Residents can send money home to their family as holiday presents. AICs can fill out a CD-28 form at the officers desk. They must include an envelope with their family’s address to receive the money. Those interested can contact the business office for more information.

Raymond Perez said he saved money from PRAS points for five months to send money home. The kids were excited to receive it and their mother paid some bills, he said.

“My 8-year-old daughter said to me ‘It showed you still cared,’” he said.

| ECHO

AROUND EOCI



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

In the background, residents and staff attend Matt Burton's trauma seminar on Aug. 29, 2025. In the foreground, Burton's book, "The Unbound Man," is stacked awaiting handout. Each resident in attendance received a free copy of the book.

LEARNING TO COPE WITH TRAUMA

Residents of EOCI attend Matt Burton's Trauma Seminar

Written by Logan Gimbel

"Experiencing trauma is like getting hit by a bus," said Matt Burton, a clinical trauma specialist.

Burton came to Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution on Aug. 29 to speak to more than 100 adults in custody about how trauma impacts life. He provided each AIC with a copy of his book, "The Unbound Man," which highlights the silent suffering men face.

Burton returned on Oct. 28 for the second portion of his seminar and to discuss his book, which 33 AICs attended.

According to Burton, 41% of domestic violence victims are male; one in four men will experience sexual trauma in their lifetime; 79% of suicide victims are male; and four out of 10

men will have cancer in their lifetime.

Burton, 57, speaks at prisons around the nation about the impact of trauma on men. He also runs the Becoming Well Institute in Tucson, Arizona, that helps people navigate sexual betrayal, more commonly known as cheating.

During the two seminars, Burton discussed the impact of trauma, the types of intimacy, intimacy avoidance and abuse.

What is Trauma?

"Trauma has played a major role in your life, and if you want to move on to a certain place, you have to deal with it," said Burton.

Burton began his seminar identifying what trauma is.

Trauma, he said, is usually an event or series of events that is unwanted, unexpected and where nothing could be done to prevent it. To start the healing process, men must become aware of the trauma experienced.

To help men identify trauma, Burton developed what he calls the three A's—awareness, acceptance and action. In order to change something, the person must be aware of it, accept it and act on it. Part of the reason men struggle to deal with trauma may be the masculinity narrative, he said.

Growing up, men are told that to be vulnerable is to be weak and to be a man is to be tough and strong, said Burton. Men ignore the hurt and project it outwards.

"I think that there is a high chance that the reason you are here is because you experienced trauma that didn't get healed," said Burton. "You projected your trauma onto somebody else."

Trauma Comes From Abuse

When Burton returned on Oct. 28, his focus was on abuse. The three most common forms of abuse people face are physical, emotional and verbal. Emotional and verbal abuse generally go hand in hand, he said.

Burton defines emotional and verbal abuse as repeated—intentional or not—insults or threats that isolate, degrade or humiliate in order to gain control over a person.

After Burton defined this type of abuse, he asked the residents in attendance to raise their hands if they experienced any form of emotional abuse — nearly every resident raised their hand. For men, the most common reaction to emotional and verbal abuse is to

downplay the impact of it on their life.

During his first seminar Burton talked to attending residents about the adverse childhood experiences questionnaire and how abuse experienced during childhood is still affecting them today. Most men in prison are considered trauma survivors, he said.

Trauma Can Lead to Intimacy Avoidance

“Intimacy is when I allow you to see all of me,” said Burton. “If you are intimacy-avoidant, that means you are choosing to withhold giving somebody all of you.”

Intimacy does not mean sex, said Burton during his first seminar, and it comes in many different forms, such as emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual.

He then discussed what it means to be intimacy-avoidant and the three separate types of intimacy avoidance – anxious-preoccupied, dismissive-avoidant and fearful-avoidant.



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Matt Burton speaks during the trauma seminar on Aug. 29, 2025. Burton gave out copies of his book to attendees and returned on Oct. 28 to discuss.

Intimacy avoidance may stem from many different traumas experienced, such as sexual trauma or attachment issues with parental figures growing up.

Despite all three intimacy avoidance

types having separate attachment styles, all three are considered insecure and have high anxiety.

“If we don’t deal with trauma,” said Burton. “It will deal with us.” | **ECHO**

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AROUND EOCI

LIFE OF A SERVICE DOG IN TRAINING

Six New Pups Born to the JLAD Program, Training Starts Right Away

Written by Chris Ainsworth



Photo by Jesus Villarreal/JLAD

JLAD puppies cuddle up on Nov. 14, 2025, a few days before being given names. According to JLAD trainers, the litter is the first they have had that chooses to dog pile for every naptime.

The life of a service dog begins like many others—in a room surrounded by unfamiliar people. For some canines born into the Joys of Living Assistance Dog program, this happens in a special room within the walls of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

Most JLAD puppies are born at EOCI or Oregon State Correctional Institution, the two facilities in Oregon with service dog training programs. The first stage of their lives, whelping, lasts from birth to eight weeks. Incarcerated trainers help by catching the puppies as they are born.

Catching is a term which means assisting in the birthing process where

someone literally catches the puppy when it is born, opens the sac and cuts the umbilical cord.

“It’s stressful and worrisome, but rewarding. When you catch a puppy there is a bond,” said trainer Jeremy Adams who caught his first puppy in September 2025. “I’m protective of all of them, but especially [the one I caught]. I call him my son.”

Puppies are born two or three times a year in the JLAD program.

“I caught a dog at OSCI that’s now a year old and here [at EOCI],” Logan Peterson said. Peterson has been a trainer for 17 months.

“You feel a certain level of pride. You want them to succeed and do their best. Every time I see her it provokes emotion,” he said.

Early on, there is a lot of playing amongst the litter. But at six weeks, staff and facility residents get a chance to hold the puppies as they begin socializing with people. Once the furballs hit eight weeks, they are taken out of the facility to receive shots and their names.

The puppies are referred to by the color of collars they wear for the first eight weeks of their life. The names for each litter are in alphabetical order and each name follows specific criteria. The names for this litter will start with “G.”

Names must have two syllables, cannot end with “O” and cannot sound like the verbal commands, or cues, that

will be taught. The JLAD program has gone through the alphabet one and a half times since the program started in 2016.

“I have gone through seven or eight whelpings in the four and a half years I have been in the program,” said facilitator Larry Wilt. “It’s pretty crazy. People don’t think they’ll remember us from when they were pups, but they do.”

Joy St. Peter, the woman who started JLAD, involves members of the public in the naming process. People can purchase tickets as a way to vote for their favorite name.

“My family has voted on names of pups that I have ended up training,” trainer Peterson said.

The JLAD program is part of a breeding co-op. When puppies are born within the co-op, some of the puppies are shared with members of the co-op.

From time to time, dogs will be trained at EOCI or OSCI that were not born at one of the facilities. Of the six born in this litter, only three will be trained as service dogs in the JLAD program. Two go to the co-op and one will go to the breeding male’s owner.

After receiving their names, the three remaining puppies begin their JLAD training. The service dogs are moved between facilities throughout their training. Multiple incarcerated people work with them to prevent the animals from getting too attached to any one person.

Puppies go through foundational training for the first six months. They are taught 27 different cues and learn 17 behavioral habits. They learn verbal commands such as “come,” “wait,” “kennel” and other basic instructions. Some of the behaviors they learn include walking etiquette, emotional self-regulation and appropriate play.

|ECHO



Photos by Jesus Villarreal/JLAD

Top: On Sept. 22, 2025, Ursa cuddles with her six newborn puppies following five hours of labor.

Middle: On Sept. 22, 2025, JLAD founder Joy St. Peter and trainer Clinton Hylton help Ursa deliver Blue.

Bottom left: Ursa cleans Blue following his birth on Sept. 22, 2025. Out of the six puppies, Blue is the largest of the litter, weighing 9 pounds and 14 ounces.



VETERAN'S DAY

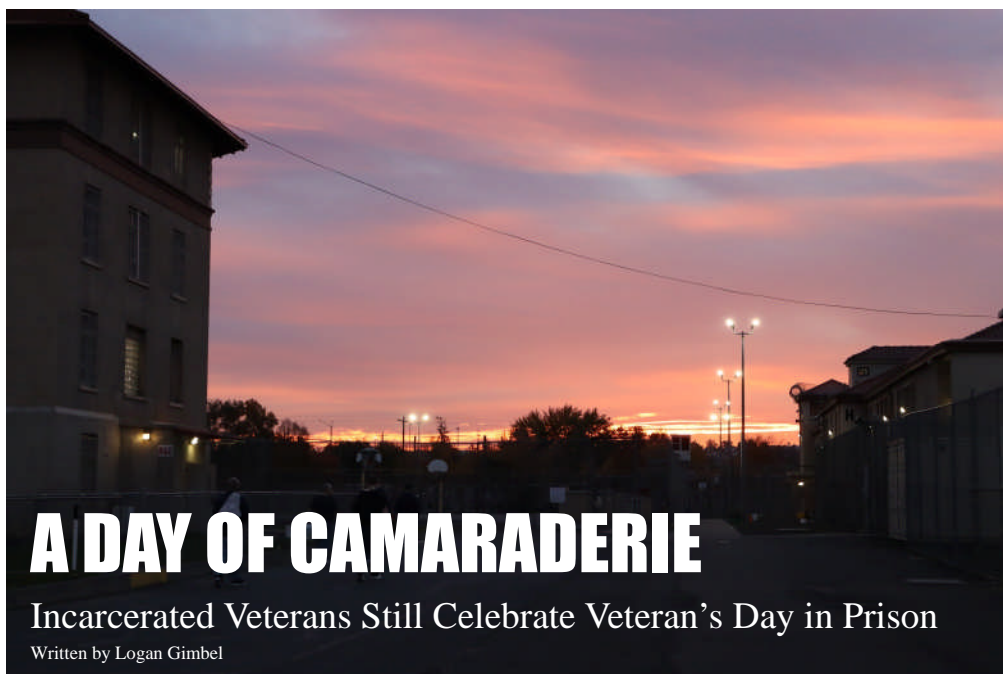


Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

The sun rises over Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in the early morning hours of Nov. 11, 2025. Just another day for some, but incarcerated veterans at EOIC still find ways to celebrate Veterans Day.

The United States of America has two federal holidays to honor its veterans. Memorial Day in May honors those who made the ultimate sacrifice, and Veterans Day in November honors all members of the armed services.

For the veterans incarcerated at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Nov. 11 is about setting aside differences and coming together. Some veterans will get together and cook, while others go outside and lift weights or exercise.

The Food Services Department provides a special meal, generally a grilled double cheeseburger and pie, to celebrate Veterans Day.

“It was nice that the facility acknowledged us with a special meal,” said resident Jerry Shaw, an U.S. Army combat veteran who served two tours in Iraq. “For me it was a quiet Veterans Day.”

This was Shaw’s second time celebrating in prison. Prior to being incarcerated, Shaw would participate in a

town parade with his fellow service members, or visit a veterans bar.

For residents Sean Reid, a Marine combat instructor, and Eric Porter, a Marine helicopter mechanic, it was their first Veterans Day in prison.

Reid and Porter celebrated the day by making a cheesecake and sharing it with other veterans on their housing unit.

Jerrad Templin, a recreation specialist at EOIC, usually tries to organize an event for the incarcerated veterans.

In 2024, he streamed the Army versus Navy college football game in the multi-purpose building. Veterans attended the event and watched the game together.

In 2025, however, Templin was out sick and there were no events.

Templin said that he does plan on offering a veterans only event, but it will not be until after the holidays, potentially in January.

“You’ve come to prison – that doesn’t make you not a veteran,” said Templin.

“We should be supporting our veterans. Always.”

By providing an event each year, Templin helps to foster camaraderie among the veterans of EOIC.

“Those guys will have things in common that other people will not experience,” said Templin.

One of the ways some Oregon prisons have fostered camaraderie among veterans is through a veteran’s club.

Patrick McGuffin, the coordinator for incarcerated veterans for the Oregon Department of Veterans’ Affairs, said that he would like to see a veteran club at EOIC.

Events or clubs that allow veterans to gather together, create an opportunity to communicate and share information specific to veterans.

Some service members may have questions about claims, the Office of Veteran Affairs, or may just need someone to talk to that understands the struggles tied to being in the service.

For example, as of August 2025, the U.S. Treasury is moving all veterans’ benefit payments to electronic deposit, but many incarcerated veterans may be unaware of the change.

Any veteran receiving payment not by direct deposit will need to complete a 31 CFR waiver request. Resident veterans may also send a communication form to their assigned counselor and request to call the treasury at 1-877-874-6347.

Currently, the treasury cannot be called from the housing unit phones.

To request a waiver, veterans can send a letter to the address below.

U.S. Treasury Electronic
Payment Solution Center
U.S. Department of the Treasury
PO Box 650527
Dallas, TX 75265

| ECHO

MINK CAUGHT ON CAMERA ON THE EAST COMPOUND

American Mink Roams the Grounds of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution

Written by Brian Daniel Bement



Photo provided by ODOC

EOCI's resident mink, spotted Sept. 2, 2025, pauses for a quick photo opportunity before resuming its nightly prowling.

Staff and residents at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution may have spotted a mysterious critter skittering around the compound. Quick, crafty and roughly the size of a ferret, this creature is an American mink.

Built to avoid predators, it has escaped capture for almost a year. Fish in the nearby Umatilla River and mice around EOCI's gardens might be why this mink came to the area.

Residents may have seen the critter skitter between gardens on the eastern side of the facility.

"The mink has been here for about a year," said grounds crew worker Larry Sahm. "He lives in the compost pile in the garden behind E, F and G building."

Staff, however, saw the creature holing up near the west compound's multipurpose building.

"The mink lives on the west side," said corrections officer J. Morfin. "It lives under a machine, an air conditioner unit over by multi."

Despite knowing two of the mink's home, Sahm said attempts to remove and relocate were unsuccessful.

"There were guys trying to catch it with their hands," said Sahm shrugging and shaking his head.

Minks move with bounding gaits, reaching speeds of up to four miles per hour. They also climb trees and swim well due to their streamlined shape. Their feet are broad with webbed fingers.

A mink has a long body which allows it to enter the burrows of prey. They are carnivores, classified as an invasive species. They will eat rodents, fish, crustaceans, frogs and birds.

Their fur tone may range from dark

blackish-tawny to light-tawny. Mink underfur is very wavy with a greyish-tawny, blue-tinted color. Some minks have a white patch under their jaw.

When stressed, a mink can expel the contents of its anal glands at a distance of one foot, so steer clear. It is known to spray other animals similar in the way a skunks sprays when it feels threatened. | **ECHO**

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IN SPORTS

BASKETBALL IN NOVEMBER

News Briefs for the Month

Written by Brian Daniel Bement and Jamil Chavis

Two Teams Cut Due to Lack of Participation

Two basketball teams, B2 and C1, have been cut this season after violating the three-game forfeit rule.

Both teams were unable to participate after some of their players were unavailable, causing them to forfeit games.

“The reason the three-forfeit rule exists is because it’s time consuming to reschedule games and the team that shows up doesn’t get to play,” said Ben Edwards, resident sports commissioner. “Also, we can schedule more games when we remove teams that aren’t playing.”

Severe Injury Downs Consistent Player

G3’s Cesar Lagunas suffered a major injury this season. He was attempting a layup and was blocked by a defender at the last second. Lagunas fell and dislocated his knee.

Lagunas’ injury required corrective surgery. It is unknown if he will be able to return to basketball in 2025.

G3’s record so far is 3-4, with their next game scheduled on Nov. 22 against G4.

Dwight Dew is the Highest Scorer in the Facility

Dwight Dew, a player for A1, scored 264 points this season, the most in the facility. His team’s record of 8 wins and 1 loss placed them as a likely contender for the west side basketball championship.

“It’s cool to score a lot of points, but

it doesn’t matter,” he said. “I’m just trying to win.”

Although Dew is the leading scorer in the facility, he said the connection with his teammates is important to winning. One of Dew’s teammates, however, suffered an injury in November.

Anthony Godlove injured his ankle, but plans to return to basketball once he has healed.

“People leave all the time,” Dew said. “They either go on transport or they go to the hole and it changes things.”

Godlove is the second-highest scorer on the team with 89 points this season.

Brown Moves to Unit A3 and Boosts Team

Tahrim Brown moved from F2 to A3 in November.

Brown’s statistics this season are 82 points, 28 rebounds and 14 assists. He has the second-highest points on his team, with Mohamed Ali in first with 245.

A3 had three losses this season, but since Brown joined the team they have won every game but one. They lost to B3, who has a 2-8 record.

“We were up by 20 with five minutes to go and lost by nine,” Brown said. “I hate losing!”

Teamwork Boosts E3 to Seven Wins on the Season

Mike Epperson of E3 said what keeps their basketball team together is sharing the ball.

“Looking at the stats, if a player is

scoring 200 plus points they are not sharing the rock,” said Epperson.

E3 holds the best record on the east side with 7 wins and 1 loss.

Coach Stephon Hartley said he balances the team by allowing the starters to play with the bench players often.

H2 Has the Leading Scorer on the East

Dylan Sanchez, from H2, is the leading scorer on the east side, with 105 points.

Sanchez said he is learning how to play with every player on the team and it is making him a better teammate.

“I feel like we have a chance in every game we have played this season,” said Sanchez.

H2 has 4 wins and 2 losses on the season.

G4 Middle of The Road, But Hopeful for Playoff Run

G4’s Eric Evans said his unit has three losses, but he knows they have the skill and cohesiveness to beat any team. G4’s record is 4-3.

Evans said they lost to F3, who also has a 4-3 record.

“That doesn’t mean we’re a bad team,” he said.

“I felt like everyone was doing their own thing,” said G4’s Saetern Senfinh, after a loss to F3.

All-Star Games Up Next, Scheduled in January

The basketball All-Star Games and activities is expected to be scheduled in the first or second week of January.

| ECHO

Editor’s note: The information in this article is accurate as of Nov. 24, 2025.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Seth Silver, 28, has been incarcerated for two-and-a-half years and will be releasing in 2026. Previously, he spent seven years in the Oregon Youth Authority. When he releases he plans on opening up a coffee shop and developing a program to hire formally incarcerated people.

With Seth Silver

Interview by Logan Gimbel

One thing that surprised me about prison was... Nothing really surprised me. Going from OYA to prison was the same story, just with a different name.

The best advice I could give someone is... Find something that you enjoy that is healthy and productive and focus on that. Find a sense of purpose.

The best item to buy off canteen is... Coffee, I love my coffee. I usually prefer Taster's Choice, but due to budgeting I stick to the Columbian or espresso.

One thing I wish I had never wasted money on is... I have always been pretty good with my money so I never really wasted it while I've been in prison.

The food I'm looking forward to eating the most is... A nice juicy steak. I don't care about the cut as long as it's cooked medium rare. I want to go back to Texas Steakhouse in Eugene. I went there once, but didn't order a steak.

The program that helped me the most... Pathfinders was the most helpful. It's a long class that requires a lot of commit-

ment, but you get out of it what you put into it. GOGI has also helped. I worked my way up and became a facilitator.

Before coming to prison, I would consider myself.... Arrogant. Everything had to bend to my will and there was no room for compromise.

Now I consider myself... More relaxed and flexible. I wake up each day and try and to do better than I did yesterday.

The change I'd like to see the most in prison... More flexibility in allowing video games and books in. Also, more commitment to positive programs for AICs. Prison is designed to break you down and build you back up, but it feels like all it does is break you down and leave you there.

What I've learned.... Compromise. People are human and we're going to make mistakes. Motivate yourself to be better than you were yesterday.

I am looking forward to... Hugging my dog George. He is a 4-year-old silk border collie. Also, spending time with my friends and family.

A piece of advice I could give to someone new to prison is... Be careful with what you say and how you say it. If you want respect you have give respect. | **ECHO**

VIDEO GAMES



Sid Meier's Civilization series is a four by four tile empire building game where players guide their burgeoning civilization through various ages of history with the goal of achieving one of several different victory conditions.

In previous entries, players would select one of multiple historical leaders such as George Washington, Gandhi, Napoleon Bonaparte, Queen Elizabeth and others who lead their respective nations.

In Civilization VII, players pick a leader and then a civilization to lead. This offers different and unique combinations, such as Harriet Tubman lead-

ing Rome or Benjamin Franklin leading China.

In Civilization VII, the matches are broken up into three separate phases: the age of antiquity, the age of exploration and the modern age. After an age ends, players must select a new civilization to lead that is unique to that era.

Each era has different victory conditions, such as owning a certain amount of settlements, importing resources from distant lands or leading the first manned mission to space.

The victory conditions, called legacy paths in Civilization VII, have mile-

stones that once reached provide bonuses which carry over to the next age.

While each leader has a unique play style and bonuses, each civilization has unique units and wonders. The nation a player picks influences which nations they may play as in the next age. Some buildings, such as granaries or forges, are considered ageless and will carry their bonuses over, while others will become obsolete after the game progresses to the next age.

Similar to previous entries, resources play an important role in empire building. However, unlike other entries, resources are not required to build certain



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

military units. Having the corresponding resource will increase the combat effectiveness of the unit.

Absent from Civilization VII is the game's version of the United Nations. Instead, in Civilization VII players are free to spend influence points to propose diplomatic actions with the other nations. Players can also spend influence to steal technology or government secrets, hinder research or many other actions.

One of the largest differences between the current civilization game and previous entries is how the settlers work. Previously settlers would found cities, but in Civilization VII they make



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Left: Gameplay for Civilization VII.

Above: Character selection for Civilization VII.

settlements. Unlike cities settlements can not produce buildings or units and all upgrades must be purchased. Any production the settlement provides is converted to gold and surplus food is sent to the players capital. Players can spend gold to convert the settlement to a city.

Civilization VII also implements changes to combat by including commander units. These units can buff the players combat units that are inside of its command radius. The commander unit has four slots that can be packed with military units, allowing players to move them all at once. This allows slower units, such as siege units, to move quicker. The commander units also receive experience and gain levels by fighting. Each time a commander levels up players may select a new buff to apply.

There are a total of four commander units players may create. An army commander, naval commander, squadron commander for aircraft, and an aircraft carrier. If a commander dies, they will respawn after a set number of turns.

Another new feature to Civilization VII is the use of mementos. Unfortunately, resident players will not be able to unlock mementos as they are an online-only feature. Luckily, players will not be missing much as the mementos only provide small bonuses for your leader.

The Civilization series has almost limitless replay value as each match is unique. For fans of history, the games have an encyclopedia containing historical information about each nation, leader and unit. Fans of strategy games might enjoy the depth of this series as they manage a civilization from the stone age to the modern era. Civilization VII is available from FLE for \$69.

Estimated play time: approximately 35 hours for a speed run, 100+ hours to for 100% completion. | **ECHO**

Have a game you would like to read a review on? Contact The Echo: EOCI Journalism Department and let us know.

VIDEOGAMES

TEN TIPS FOR BEST GAMEPLAY

Pointers For Almost Any Game

Written by Nickolas Vega

The Nintendo Switch has been around for a few years now, but that doesn't mean that everyone is an experienced gamer. Here's a list of a few pointers—not cheat codes—to help you get started, or keep you going:

Check Options Menus – The options have a lot of useful metrics to be adjusted, such as difficulty, gyroscope and joystick sensitivity. It's important to adjust these before playing to enhance your experience.

Explore Perimeters – Many games have giant maps to be explored, but a lot of items end up hidden at the perimeter, so make sure to check the outermost part of the map, and work your way inward.

Save Money – All the resources you need to beat the game can typically be acquired through battles or by searching areas well. Try to save your money for the epic items which are usually available towards the end of a game, and let the adventure pay for itself.

Trespass – Go everywhere besides where the story tells you to. In a lot of cases this will lead you to epic treasures or abilities that make navigating the game more manageable.

Save Often – As we all know by now, there are plenty of games that crash on occasion. Life is easier when you have backup saves, so make sure your data is safe.

Learn Perfect Block/Parry/Dodge – This technique is nearly exclusive to action games, but is useful for everyone to learn, because it doesn't matter if an enemy can hit you for a million points of damage if you simply dodge. Perfect timing varies in games, but will likewise boost hand-eye coordination.

Play on Hard – A lot of people are tempted to play a game on easy, but this really just cuts down the hours a game lasts, and cuts into the ratio of money to hours spent on the game. Harder difficulties cause you to think and plan more as failure is so much

closer. This helps with hand-eye coordination and manual dexterity in the case of action games, so it's a win-win situation, and when you beat a game on hard, it becomes a win-win scenario.

Build Relationships – This doesn't seem like it would be important, but more games have a mechanic of becoming close with comrades. This usually allows for skills to be shared, secret conversations to play out, or even changes the ending, so make sure to make friends with everyone.

Don't Rage Quit – This one is self-explanatory, but if you find something in a game impossible, take a day or two to decompress and come back to it. Chances are an easy solution will pop into mind in the interim.

Have Fun – The purpose and most important part of games is to enjoy them, so if a game is starting to feel more like work or a commitment, perhaps it's time to change games, or even change activities for a while. **ECHO**

NOW HIRING

OCE Work Opportunity: Office Clerk 2

OCE FORGE (Machine Shop) – Salem, OR

See housing unit bulletin
boards for full details



Applicants must meet the following qualifications:

- Must have a valid social security number or equivalent
- Have at least six months' time incarcerated with clear conduct.
- Have no program failures or DRs in the past six months.
- Applicants must not have current or prior felony convictions within the past five years for ID theft, fraud or computer-related crimes as outlined in OCE policy 05.01.01.
- Available to work Monday through Friday 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. without interruption

Application submission process: If interested in applying, please send an application to Christian Shroyer at the FORGE: 8045 State St, Salem, OR 97317 or send to to Daniel Bielenberg at SCI: 4005 Aumsville Hwy SE, Salem, OR 97317.

Applications will not be accepted after Dec. 30, 2025.



NOW HIRING TUTORS

The Education Department is hiring tutors
Tutor requirements are:

- 1 Have a high school diploma or GED
- 2 No misconduct reports or program fails within a year
- 3 A CASAS reading score of 242 or higher
- 4 A current CASAS math score

To apply:
Contact Mrs. Fitz in the
Education Department
by Jan. 1, 2026.

IT'S TUTOR TIME!

PRAS starts at 14 points
with an opportunity to
increase to 16.

Typical work hours are
Mon-Fri, 8:15-11 a.m.
and 12:30-3 p.m.

Be a Part of Change

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.

What to expect:

Tutors are usually hired in groups. Applicants take an exam similar to GED testing and must meet a scoring minimum to be eligible. An interview is conducted to determine general knowledge and interpersonal skills. Hired applicants complete a one week introductory training.

NOTICES

NOTICES

TREE NUT, SESAME, SOY AND MILK ALLERGY NOTICE

AICs with tree nut and sesame allergies, who experience anaphylactic reactions, need to report their allergy to Health Services. Health Services already tracks AICs with milk and soy allergies. Food Services just purchased Toasted Oats—Toasted O’s—a cereal they have purchased in the past.

This cereal is processed in the same facility as tree nuts, such as almonds, sesame, soy, and milk derivatives or ingredients made from milk. To avoid exposure, you must ask Food Services staff what dry cereal is being served then self-select by asking for no dry cereal when Toasted Oats are served. During the Fall-Winter 2025-26 [menu], dry cereal is on the menu twice weekly. However, institutions may make changes anytime, without notice.

Ky Ford, MS, RD, LD
ODOC Dietitian

SUSTAINABILITY IDEAS WELCOME

EOCI’s green team welcomes ideas for how to make the prison more eco-friendly.

The green team is a group of staff members and managers from various departments that meet monthly to review sustainability at EOCI.

To propose an idea for how to reduce waste, power or other resources, send a communication form to IWP: Green Team.

PACKAGE AUTHORIZATIONS

Due to a personnel change, package authorizations will be processed through the Operations Captain’s office. Contact OSII Wagnier.

EXTENSION CORDS

Due to a personnel change, requests for extension cords will be processed through R&D. To request an extension cord, adults in custody will have their unit officer verify the need for an extension cord. The officer will stamp and sign a communication form, which the AIC will send to R&D.

Extension cords are only available for television power cables that do not reach the outlet.

FLE GAME LIST NOTICE

Bloodstained: Ritual of the Night, recently added to the Nintendo game list, will not play on some consoles.

The game requires a profile linked with a Nintendo account in order to start. All Nintendo Switch consoles distributed to incarcerated people from Fully Loaded Electronics have this master profile. But, if the master profile gets deleted, there is no way for residents in prison to re-link a new profile.

Residents can contact Fully Loaded Electronics for more information. They are open Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Their phone number, 425-582-3173, is institution-approved.

HOLIDAY PHOTOS IN MULTI

Starting Monday, Nov. 24, Multi will be setting up and running holiday photos. The decorations will remain up until photos are completed. Multi will be closed from Nov. 24 to Dec. 5, tentatively. Music and art programs will run as scheduled during the day, but other multi activities are canceled.

STOCKING STUFFER EVENT

The annual stocking stuffer event will

occur on Dec. 5. The event is sign up only.

GOSPEL ECHOES COOKIE PROJECT

Grandma’s cookies, phone books and holiday cards will be handed out in the dining hall on Dec. 8. Housing units will be called individually after lunch. Sign up is not required.

MENNONITE CHRISTMAS CHOIR CONCERT

The Mennonites will be performing in the chapel on Dec. 13 at 6:30 p.m. until 8 p.m.

Sign up is required for this event. See housing unit bulletin board for more details.

OPEN BIBLE BRASS CHRISTMAS CONCERT

A brass band will be performing holiday music in the chapel on Dec. 14 at 1 p.m.

The band is expected to include trumpets, a saxophone, French horn, tuba, trombones, a snare drum and cymbals.

Sign up is required for this event. See housing unit bulletin board for more details.

17th ANNUAL CHRISTMAS SING-A-LONG

The annual holiday sing-a-long is scheduled for Dec. 23 at 6:30 p.m. in the chapel.

Hot chocolate and cookies will be provided.

Sign up is required for this event. See housing unit bulletin board for more details.



In partnership with CURE, the Oregon Department of Corrections Reentry and Release Unit invite friends and family of individuals nearing release to learn about the release process, support services and timelines.

To join an upcoming online Reentry and Release Community Outreach Session, please use the QR code to access the Microsoft Teams link.



Oregon CURE's mission is to reduce crime by advocating for effective criminal justice policies and practices.

We are a volunteer organization for families and friends of those in prison.

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



tell friends & family to visit:



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: Dec., 2025

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

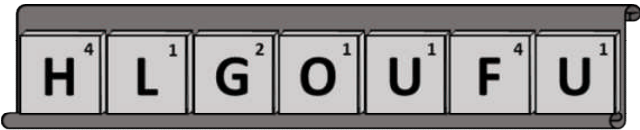
DW = Double Word Score

TL = Triple Letter Score

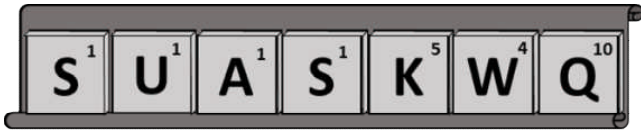
DL = Double Letter Score

TW			DL					TW				DL			TW
	DW				TL				TL				DW		
		DW				DL		DL	W	I	N	T	E	R	
DL			DW				DL		I		DW			DL	
				DW					Z						
	TL				TL				A				TL		
		DL				DL		DL	R			DL			
TW			DL		H	O	L	I	D	A	Y				TW
		DL			A	DL		DL				DL			
	TL				P				TL				TL		
				DW	P					DW					
DL			DW		Y	E	A	R			DW			DL	
		DW				DL		DL				DW			
	DW				TL				TL				DW		
TW			DL							DL					TW

PLAYER 1

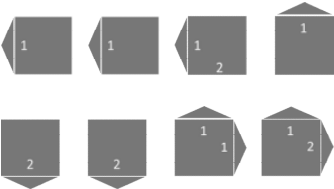
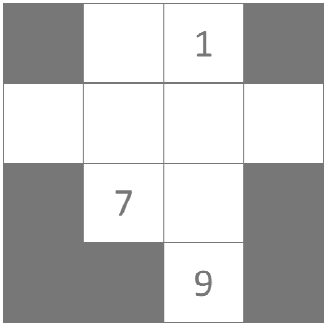


PLAYER 2



The Alan Turing CODEBREAKER’S PUZZLE BOOK Compiled by Dr Gareth Moore

Place the digits 1 to 9
so that it is possible to
jump from one digit to the
next, in consecu-
tive order, using the
steps provided. Each
step is an instruction to
move a number of
squares horizontally or
vertically, and each
must be used exactly
once, in an order of
your choosing. No part
of a step can involve
crossing over a black
square.



This word search grid
contains some hidden
words, all at least four
letters long, which can be
written in any direction,
either forwards or back-
wards, including diago-
nally. For the purposes of
this puzzle, ignore any
words fewer than four let-
ters. Once you have found
the words, you will notice
that every letter of the
alphabet has been used at
least once—except one.
Which is that unused
letter?

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Theme: Up a Tree

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20				21						22				
			23					24						
25	26	27					28	29			30	31	32	
33						34					35			
36						37				38	39			
40					41				42					
43			44	45					46					
			47					48						
	49	50				51	52				53	54	55	
56					57					58				
59					60					61				
62					63					64				

From USAtoday.com

Puzzle created by: Jay Sullivan

ACROSS

- 1 Home of Italian bubbly
- 5 A dancing Astaire
- 10 Dare into doing
- 14 Frost
- 15 Ryan with the fastball
- 16 “Rats!”
- 17 Start to mate?
- 18 Language of Sri Lanka
- 19 Visitor to Oz
- 20 It’s up in the air?
- 23 Flag down
- 24 Auto shaft attachment
- 25 Gross out
- 28 Step over the line, perhaps
- 33 Major transportation routes
- 35 Entrance requirement
- 36 Current events?
- 37 Alley-___
- 38 One who gives a hoot
- 40 Do not delay

- 41 Spot for a nest?
- 43 Comeback
- 46 Gives the slip
- 47 Stammering syllables
- 48 Start a triathlon
- 49 Eve’s offering
- 56 Hairwear
- 57 Incline
- 58 Less than rarely
- 59 Home of the Kon-Tiki Museum
- 60 “Papa Bear”
- 61 Concert halls
- 62 Reply to a bartender
- 63 Some siblings
- 64 One thing to do with a coin

DOWN

- 1 Ishmael’s skipper
- 2 Type of grapes

- 3 Bye words
- 4 Something to rule with
- 5 Aardvark’s target
- 6 Factotum
- 7 Salt’s saint
- 8 Like members of the flock
- 9 Ties up
- 10 Relax completely
- 11 River or state
- 12 Soon, to a bard
- 13 Head of a syndicate
- 21 Horseshoe parts
- 22 ___ in turkey
- 25 In conflict
- 26 Haggling point
- 27 Some kicks
- 28 Gov’t security
- 29 Tow-truck attachment, perhaps
- 30 Having a sharp taste
- 31 “Guys and Dolls” tune
- 32 Kostunica followers
- 34 Letters of credit?
- 38 Nev. Neighbor
- 39 Plant used as an astringent
- 41 At first glance
- 42 Neophobe’s fear
- 44 Man or woman
- 45 Symbol of sovereignty
- 48 Assembly line item
- 49 Sea things
- 50 Give the once-over
- 51 Western command
- 52 Miro contemporary
- 53 Word processing command
- 54 Finish the cupcakes, e.g.
- 55 Drinks from a bag, often
- 56 “Holy smoke!”

ANSWER KEYS

		6		
	2		7	
8	3	4		5
		1	9	

Puzzle 1

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

Puzzle 2:
The Letter P

ANSWER KEY

S	S	O	J		S	N	I	W	T		N	E	H	W	
A	V	A	D	E		S	A	T	A	H		O	S	L	O
E	C	E	O	N	C	E	G	R	A	D	E	G	S	W	I
T	O	R	B	I	D	E	N	F	R	U	I				
			M			S	W	I			S	E	R	S	
S			D	E	S		E	L	U		S	P	O	N	S
B			I	M	B		N	O	T	O		A	C	T	
R			E	R			C	A	R	E		D	S	N	W
E			C	U	E		S				I	N	E	S	T
S			S	P	A	S		T	R	E	S	L	A	T	A
							C	A	M			H	A	I	L
			N				O	N				C	H	L	C
N			O	N			L	I	O		T	A	M	I	L
O			N	O			H	O	N		A	R			
A			D	G	O	A	D	E	L	E					

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

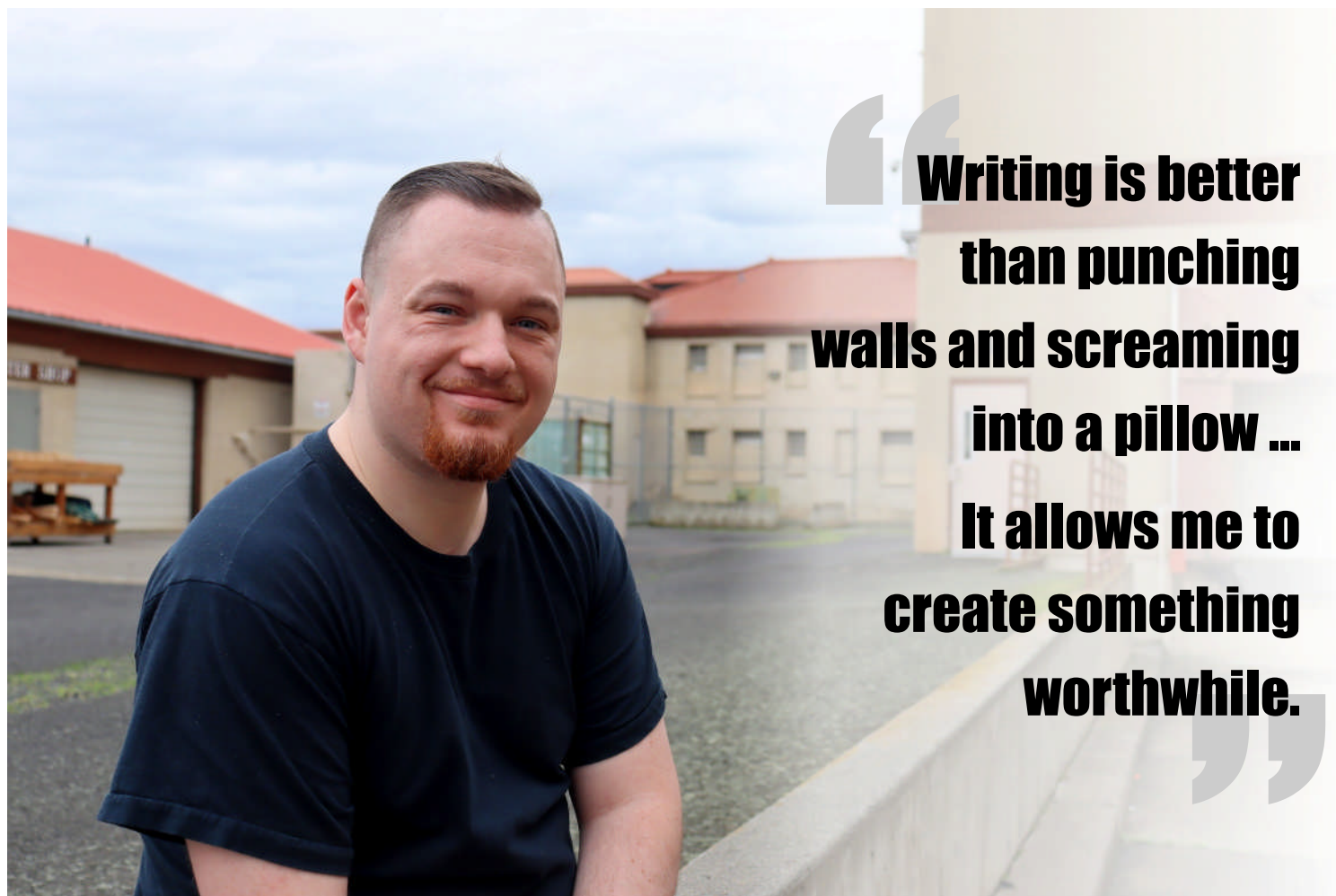


Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Alek Wright poses for a photograph at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, where he resides, on Nov. 19, 2025. Wright started his prison sentence with the Oregon Youth Authority before transferring to state prison. He uses poetry to cope with incarceration.

ALEK WRIGHT IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Incarcerated Writer Shares His Thoughts on Poetry and Life

Written by Logan Gimbel

Alek Wright was 17 years old when he was sentenced to life with the possibility of parole. Separated from family, dealing with severe social anxiety, and shipped out to Oregon Youth Authority, he struggled to handle the storm that had swept up his life. Wright, now 26, has found that the written word helps him to cope with prison life.

“Writing is better than punching walls and screaming into a pillow,” said Wright. “It’s productive and people find meaning in it. It allows me to create something worthwhile with my

emotions instead of destroying something.”

Wright became an award-winning poet at 18 while attending school in OYA. His English teacher pushed him to submit a piece for a national contest called Words Unlocked. Thinking nothing of it at the time, Wright wrote a poem titled “Why” and submitted it.

His poem was about how some people serving time threw away their success, despite having everything. Months later Wright got a notice saying he won third

place—in the nation.

“It was surreal. It was the first poem I had ever written,” said Wright. “It was the first award I’d ever won in anything. I was super excited, jumping up and down and I couldn’t wait to show my family.”

His inspiration for poetry came at difficult time in his life. While sitting in juvenile corrections and awaiting a trial that would determine the rest of his life, Wright came across the poem “Fire and Ice” by Robert Frost.

“I was in awe,” said Wright. “It had a deep meaning, but it was spoken simply.”

For him, the poem was about choosing to die from the burning heat of love or the ice-cold embrace of hate.

Wright believes poetry is intimate. There is no exact meaning, he said. Readers may get a different meaning than what the author intended based on their life experiences. Wright likens poetry to the wizard’s first rule in the novel series “Sword of Truth” by Terry Goodkind. The rule states that someone will believe something because they either want it to be true or fear it to be true.

“In poetry, people are searching for answers to their own life questions. When they read it, they let the words give them the answer they want or fear,” said Wright.

One of his more recent poems is titled “Pointing Fingers.” He was watching the news about the government shutdown affecting people relying on government assistance. Wright’s brothers rely on SNAP benefits, food stamps, to eat and he was angry that he could not help. He said the poem is about fighting in political culture and how each side only points out the extremes, forgetting everything in between.

“When the inspiration strikes me, I can usually find the words I want,” said Wright. “It’s in the moment and the moment is very fleeting. It’s almost like a feeling of weightlessness. Instead of butterflies there’s like a little balloon inside me that’s lifting me up.”

Now he has moved beyond poetry to writing a fantasy novel. Like his poetry, Wright draws inspiration from his life. He has written about 200 pages of what he hopes will be a novel. The story reflects his life experiences and shares a message of redemption.

For those interested in starting poetry, Wright said it does not have to rhyme. Many poets do rhyme, but it is not required. Some formats, such as haiku, do not rhyme. Wright suggests writers find their flow, as long as it tells a riveting story and captures emotions.

“Poetry is like a love language. It’s a passion,” said Wright. “You never

write a poem that describes a table – you describe what the table evokes. What it makes you feel. What it represents.”

Wright submitted a few poems to the national incarcerated writers competition, Pen America. He recently received a letter saying his poems were received, but he has to wait until June 2026 to see if he won. | **ECHO**

Time and the Rose
By Alek Wright

A Rose is sought for its beauty
A Rose is given for love
A Rose gives joy to a cold world
It spreads laughter among families
But most don't think of time
How it withers the Rose
Destroying its beauty, turning it to dust
How time changes the love that was given
How it Reverses everything it Gave
But we also forget that without time
We could hold no value for all we've lost
We would not respect the Rose's beauty
We would not cherish the love and joy we have
We would be cold and shallow
So forever respect the time and the Rose

Whiskey Neat
By Alek Wright

I'll take a whiskey neat
Swaying like a tree on my feet
Chase it down
To kill my frown
Soon the pain is gone
I can put my happy face on
So I fade to the black abyss
And enjoy my ignorant bliss
I wake up the next day
My head and emotions sway
Back to my show, I fake upbeat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Letters to The Editor

Edited for length and clarity

COFFEE IS EXPENSIVE

Coffee is expensive, but the math in the article 'Budgeting for Coffee' [The Echo, Nov., 2025.] isn't mathing. The article states, "One filter is needed per brew, adding an additional 55 cents." If that math were correct, one 100 pack of coffee filters would cost an AIC a whopping \$55. The actual cost of a single filter is \$0.055.

Here's an EOCI life hack. If you truly want the most cost effective coffee mix, kitchen workers have access to unlimited ground brewed coffee while they work their shift. The coffee benefits may be worth as much as PRAS.

- Fiending for Coffee,
EOCI

Hello Fiending,

You are right! The math is off in that article. The author of the article forgot to move the decimal and the editors missed it.

Thank you for letting us know and for the great life hack. This week we will be working on a punishment for the article's author, but we haven't decided what that will be yet. No coffee for a week perhaps?

-The Echo/1664

MADE IN THE USA

In a recent article about the rising canteen prices [The Echo, Nov., 2025.], the article said tariffs have likely increased the cost of coffee. But the packaging for Folgers and many other coffees we buy says made in the USA or lists a city here.

How would tariffs effect the cost of coffee if the item is made in the USA.

-American Made
EOCI

Hello American Made,

Great questions.

Most coffee companies purchase their coffee beans from outside the United States. The coffee bean is processed and manufactured here.

For example, the Columbian coffee we can buy lists Rancho Dominguez, California as the place of production. But California is not a part of Columbia, obviously.

Experts call coffee a tariff-sensitive item because almost all coffee plants are grown overseas, even though the coffee companies may be national.

-The Echo/1664

EDITORIAL PROGRAM

At Warner Creek, we have seen issues of The Echo at EOCI. It has inspired us AICs on the Peer Council, as well as some management, to try and start a similar program here. Would you be able to send information on how you started the program and how you work together with the institution and each other? There are AICs here that are still holding on to newsletters of The Echo that are a couple of years old. It proves how big of a positive impact your program has.

-Benjamin Bowers,
WCCF

Hello Benjamin Bowers,

We would be happy to send you some newsletters and information. At EOCI, writing for The Echo is a work assignment, although we have developed some programming components.

We started more than 7 years ago, so I would say the biggest and most important thing is patience. And, everyone at WCCF can access The Echo on Edovo if they would like to read new or previous issues.

Thanks for reading!

-The Echo/1664

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

Help Reshape the Narrative of What it Means to be Incarcerated

The Journalism Department is seeking help for a few major stories in 2026. Your voice matters and you can help us shape the narrative about what it means to be incarcerated. Here is a chance to share your experience in prison.

We are looking for multiple people who would like to be interviewed for the following articles:

- **Cost of Canteen:** How has inflation and the cost of canteen impacted you? Have you changed your spending because of the rising cost of goods?
- **Surviving Cancer in Prison:** Have you had cancer or another serious illness? What was it like to go through treatment while incarcerated?
- **The Impact of M11:** What's it like to grow old in prison? We are looking for people sentenced under Measure 11 that have served at least 15 years in prison.
- **The Unlikely Entrepreneurs:** Have you started a business while incarcerated? How did you start and what makes you successful?
- **Short Staffing:** EOCI has been understaffed for years. How does this affect you? What's it like to have canceled yards, programs, classes or work assignments and to deal grouchy staff members working long shifts? Should incarcerated people advocate for more prison staff? What do you think?
- **Lost in the Letters:** Are you a part of the LGBTQ+ community and would like to talk about your experiences in the prison setting? What is it like to navigate unfair stigmas or false narratives? What do you want people to know or learn about your experience?

Please keep in mind, our department may publish the article in The Echo, 1664, with Prison Journalism Project, with the East Oregonian, and others. Our publications are on Edovo and reach more than 1,000 prisons in the United States. We are also online.

If you are interesting in sharing your voice, contact The Echo: EOCI Journalism Department.

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

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

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.



THE ECHO, VOLUME VIII - ISSUE 85, DECEMBER 2025

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 EOCl, 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 EOCl. 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.

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