

## **Livingston County News - Groveland Correctional staff 'Make a Difference' in community**

By Matt Leader

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In what has become an annual tradition, staff from the Groveland Correctional Facility took to the streets of Livingston County last month to craft decorative displays in recognition of Make a Difference Day.

About eight members of the prison staff installed the displays, complete with corn stalks, bales of hay and all manner of gourds, at Noyes Hospital in Dansville, Noyes Health Services in Geneseo, KidStart in Mount Morris and Mount Morris High School.

Pumpkins and squash were donated by the Groveland's Inmate Lifers' Organization, Lieutenant Brian Semmel donated straw bales and cornstalks, Vocational Supervisor Beth Patrick donated cornstalks, Correspondence Supervisor Susan Zeh donated gourds and Fitzpatrick's Farm Market in Arkport donated mums.

Patrick, who's participated in decorating different sites across the county for the past five years, said she and her co-workers enjoy getting out into the community.

"We like to get out in the community so that people can see that hey, this is what we do," said Patrick, speaking outside Mount Morris High School Oct. 19. "We want to be part of the community and show what services we have and just give back."

"You kind of get a bad perception (in corrections)," added Connie Partridge, who helped Patrick decorate Mount Morris High School and KidStart. "You only ever hear about our bad eggs."

But putting up decorative displays isn't all that staff, and inmates, at Groveland Correctional do to better the local community – they're busy throughout the year.

This past year, for the first time, Groveland's Inmate Lifers' Organization, which is comprised of inmates with long sentences, usually more than 20 years, grew and donated produce to a slew of different food banks across the county.

"They usually grow it for themselves," said Kevin Young, who runs the program. "This time they wanted to donate half of what they produced and they donated over 2,700 pounds."

The lifers grew everything from peppers and zucchini to tomatoes and green beans.

"Anything you can think of," said Young.

Not only does the donated food help needy residents across the county, but it instills a sense of pride in the inmates who nurture their crops from first till to last harvest.

“You don’t think that kind of stuff is going on in there, but the guys really enjoy it,” said Patrick. “It makes them feel good when they know this stuff is going out into the communities – either somebody’s feeding a family or making something look nice.”

Among the other initiatives staff and inmates at Groveland Correctional Facility participated in during 2017:

- The facility’s Vocational Horticulture Program provided plants and flowers for non-profit agencies and municipalities in Livingston County. All plants and flowers were grown by inmates at Groveland Correctional Facility.
- Pumpkins grown by Groveland’s Inmate Lifers’ Organization were donated to the Make a Difference Day displays.
- For its Martin Luther King Jr. Food Drive, Groveland Correctional Facility donated 165 lbs of food and money to a local food pantry.
- As a part of the Season for Non-Violence, Groveland’s Inmate Organizations raised more than \$756, which was donated to IAC Kids, an organization that helps families who are in need of financial assistance during their child’s long-term hospitalization.