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Inmates paid \$37M in '95-'03 fees, fines



From their earnings averaging one dollar a day, inmates have been assessed more than \$4 million a year in fees and fines since 1995 that go to the state's general fund, courts or crime victims. One of the sources of those monies is fees assessed when inmates are found guilty at disciplinary hearings, like the one above being conducted at Great Meadow by CO John Hunt (left) and Lt. Nick DiBiase.

Inmates pay taxes, own expenses, aid families

Inmates paid \$37M in fees, fines, since '95, then work release inmates paid \$32M more

This month's cover story details the more than \$4 million annually that inmates – earning an average of one dollar a day – are assessed in fees and fines that go to the state's general revenue funds, the courts or crime victims.

The \$37 million assessed over the eight fiscal years between April 1995 through March 2003 is enough to pay one year's operating budget at Eastern or Upstate. (See story on page 4.)

Not included in those numbers is the impact of these payments made by work release inmates during the eight calendar years from January 1995 through December 2003:

- \$28,430,293 in federal, state and local taxes.
- \$3,641,033 in mandated support and maintenance payments to their families to reduce the incidence of public assistance.
- \$23,021,208 in their own expenses including meals, transportation and other costs that would otherwise be paid by taxpayers.
- \$28,796,221 in mandated savings, so that inmates can pay rent, buy food and meet other expenses when this money is returned to them when they are released.

These numbers exclude the \$20 million in inmate collect call only-telephone commissions paid

annually into the Department's Family Benefit Fund.

While inmates or their advocates might argue that these assessments and fees are excessive, I think they strike an appropriate balance in comparison to what is occurring in other states across the nation.

In a national survey released by the nonpartisan American Correctional Association, it reported that:

- Alabama assesses work release inmates 40 percent of their net earnings in program administration costs, twice the rate that we charge. (See cover story.)
- North Dakota charges inmates \$3 for every doctor's visit. Nearly three-quarters of states charge inmates from \$1-\$10 per medical visit. We charge nothing.
- Tennessee inmates pay \$3 for TB tests (that we provide all inmates and staff annually for free) or flu shots (that we give free each year to all high-risk inmates and staff).

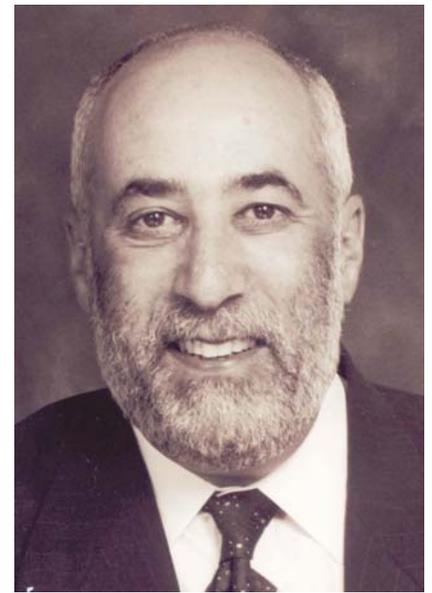
So I think in terms of this national survey, New York's policies are in line with those of other states in expecting inmates to help offset the cost of their incarceration.

The payments work release inmates are required to pay are especially legitimate: All workers should pay taxes, support their families and learn to budget income against expenses.

And the *Spotlight* column on the facing page points out that New Yorkers are also committed to providing inmates with, among other things, quality medical care – for free.

At the same time, taxpayers are funding multi-million dollar inmate programs that contributed to a one-third decline since 1995 in parolees returned to prison for the commission of new crimes. That shows New Yorkers are committed to providing inmates with programs that help them succeed upon their release, not just the basic needs mandated of all U.S. prisons.

So while inmates are being required to help offset costs, their contributions are dwarfed by the taxpayer's commitment to improving inmate lives – today and tomorrow. 



Commissioner Goord

This month's articles

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ON THE COVER: The masthead brings DOCS|TODAY together with its past via "Copper John," the Colonial soldier who has stood atop the front gate of Auburn, the state's oldest prison, since 1821. The American flag was affixed to his bayonet in memory of those who lost their lives during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks upon the United States. The flag itself was taken from a photograph of it flying above Ground Zero.

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Rapid HIV test gives inmate status quicker, allows earlier treatment

Federal officials support new regimen to reduce anxiety, increase test numbers

A new way of testing inmates for HIV infection is providing them a quicker way of knowing whether they are infected and allowing those who are to get into an appropriate treatment regimen sooner.

Test results are available on-site within a half hour, compared to the older test requiring an outside lab test that provided results in about two weeks.

The new rapid HIV test, now available in half the state's prisons, is recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) because it sharply reduces the period during which the patient is anxious about the results. The rapid test is reportedly 99.6 percent accurate, according to its developer.

The CDC urges use of the test because it believes that knowing results sooner will encourage more at-risk individuals to seek testing, if for no other reasons than to allay their fears if the test provides negative results. Among inmates, 95 percent of those given a choice opt for the rapid test rather than the older version that can take weeks to provide results.

Blind seropositivity tests indicate that as many as 5,500 of the state's roughly 65,000 inmates may be HIV infected. Currently, 3,000 inmates are under treatment for AIDS or HIV-related diseases.

The key to the test is that it uses a pin-prick, quite often to a finger, to produce a droplet of blood and immediate results.

That's much quicker than the older "oral fluid collection" process that requires a turn around period of as much as a few weeks to obtain lab results.

Both the rapid and "oral fluid" tests are paid for by the state Department of Health.

The "oral fluid collection" test is performed on material from a swab rolled against the inner cheek. It is as accurate as a blood test. Since many inmates at risk of HIV have damaged blood veins because of drug use, oral collection has been the preferred method of testing.

In addition, medical staff using the rapid or oral tests do not

have to risk a needle stick required to draw a blood sample in that alternative version of testing.

The Department began a pilot usage of the rapid HIV test a year ago this month, expanding it to approximately 16 facilities by the end of last year. It has since been put into use at another two dozen facilities. It is expected to be expanded to all 71 facilities by the end of 2004.

The approved use of the new test is expected to have a dramatic effect on reducing result delays for the 15-20,000 inmates who are tested annually.

The Department's consistent implementation of HIV testing and treatment protocols have contributed to a 94 percent decline in inmate HIV/AIDS deaths, from 257 in 1995 to 15 last year.

The most recent sampling of incoming inmates, conducted in 2000, found an HIV seropositivity rate of 5 percent among males -- a 73 percent decrease from the 18 percent found in the first sample conducted in 1988. For women, the comparable rates were 14 percent in 2002 and 19 percent in 1995.

HIV testing was initially developed not for the benefit of the infected person, but to protect others, by ensuring the infected blood was kept out of the nation's blood banks. That was designed to prevent transmission of the virus by transfusions using HIV-infected blood.

The medical community soon recognized that knowing HIV infection status could make a difference in helping people live longer with the disease. As a result, DOCS has used HIV testing as a diagnostic tool since the early days of the test in the 1980s.

DOCS has worked with the AIDS Institute of the Department of Health to make HIV testing as available as possible in state prisons.

Some of the testing is done by DOCS staff, some by AIDS Institute staff and some by representatives of community based organizations working under contract with the Institute in state prisons. 



Nurse takes droplet of blood (above) and then demonstrates a rapid HIV test (below) producing results in a half hour.



Inmates pay \$4M annually in fines, fees to taxpayers, crime victims

Inmate fees increase with mandate to pay for listing on sex offender, DNA registries

As staff is affected by the continued downsizing of the state's prison population, it is fair to ask what contribution inmates are making to the state's coffers.

Consider this: Inmates are paid an average of one dollar a day – and paid \$37 million in fees and fines from 1995-2003 to the state's general tax revenue fund, the courts and the Crime Victims Board.

Inmates can receive funds from outside sources as well as from the state's \$16.4 million annual inmate payroll. Thus, of the \$131.2 million inmates were paid from April 1995 through March 2003, they paid \$37 million of that – 28 percent – right back to the state.

“Inmate fees and fines serve many purposes,” Commissioner Goord said.

“They recompense crime victims. They add to state revenues and offset costs that would otherwise be paid by taxpayers. But of equal importance are the lessons they teach inmates: fees are either imposed to deter misconduct that often-times endangers staff or other inmates, or to teach inmates that there is a cost associated with the privileges that they seek.”

Just as inmates are assessed \$5 for Tier II and III misbehavior reports, for example, they pay administrative fees to participate in work release. They are also assessed fines and fees imposed by the courts for their felony sentences.

And new inmate fees enacted last year by the state Legislature mean more money will be headed toward crime victims and state coffers in the future.

Between April 1, 1995, and December 31, 2003 the Department collected \$14,899,122 in various DOCS-imposed fees, with the vast majority of those proceeds being funneled into the state general fund.

That money came from the charges imposed on inmates for disciplinary infractions, room and board costs at work release facilities, day reporter fees, arts and crafts fees and cash confiscated as contraband from inmates.

In all, DOCS turned over to the state general fund \$8,615,381 in room and board fees for work release inmates, \$3,620,056 from fines because of disciplinary infractions and \$2,631,129 from “day reporters” – work release inmates who live at home but report to work release prisons on a regularly scheduled basis.

In addition, DOCS has also given \$32,556 to the Crime Victims Board – which benefits victims of crime and their families – over the same period.

The crime victims funds came from the Department's share of the proceeds of arts and crafts items made by inmates and sold during the Department's annual arts and crafts show, which was terminated in 2001. Cash confiscated from inmates is also donated to the Crime Victims Board.

Court-imposed inmates fees collected totaled \$22,050,510 between April 1, 1995, and December 31, an average of more than \$2.5 million a year. Of that amount, \$767,396 was earmarked by the courts for direct disbursement to crime victims and the remaining \$21,283,114 was levied by courts in the form of mandatory surcharges based on the crime of conviction.

In the long run, all of the court-imposed fees will find their way to crime victims. Those not paid while offenders are imprisoned will be collected after they are released.

All of those proceeds raised through court charges are turned over to the Criminal Justice Improvement Account, which assists crime victims throughout New York. That money is subsequently directed to petitioning agencies like the Crime Victims Board to be given to the needy.



Work release inmates, such as these at Buffalo, pay an administrative fee.

The courts have also collected \$186,483 in filing fees from New York state inmates from December 1999-2003 – when Governor Pataki's law took effect that requires inmates to pay court filing fees like every other litigant. Filing fees imposed on inmates by the Court of Claims totaled \$50,343 while fees imposed by other courts throughout the state amounted to \$136,140.

A new law that went into effect last May 15 required inmates to pay a \$50 fee if they are required to be registered as a sex offender and a \$50 fee to be registered with the state DNA data bank. Income from those new fees through 2003 totals \$7,500 – \$6,800 for DNA fees and \$700 in sex offender registration fees.

Inmates with monetary judgments or obligations against them see their wages garnished to satisfy them.

“Inmates are being held financially accountable for their crimes and the pain and suffering that they have caused victims and their families,” said Commissioner Goord. “Inmates should pay for their misdeeds inside prison as much as for their crimes outside in our communities. We will continue to vigorously pursue adequate compensations to which we feel crime victims, their families and state taxpayers are entitled.”

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Thanks to an in-depth reporting and review system, DOCS personnel can ascertain almost immediately after the arrival of new inmates whether they owe court-imposed fees – and then staff ensures monies are collected and properly disbursed.

Upon an inmate's arrival at one of the Department's reception centers, Inmate Records Coordinators review commitment documents to determine the amount of crime victim fees due and if any court-ordered restitutions were imposed. Inmate Accounts places an encumbrance on the inmate's account, noting the amounts owed.

When inmates have money in their account – either as a result of wages from a facility job, program assignment or through an outside gift – a portion of those proceeds offsets the debt. The process continues until the obligation is satisfied.

Inmates working inside prison have 40 percent of their wages deducted if they have two or more outstanding judgments against them and 20 percent if they have one.

If they receive money from the outside, 100 percent is garnished where there are two or more judgments pending and 50 percent where there is one.

The same encumbrance procedure applies to inmates who are found guilty at disciplinary proceedings and are assessed a monetary penalty but do not have the funds in their account to pay off the entire amount at one time.

For work release inmates, after room and board costs are deducted, 100 percent of their wages are garnished if they have two or more outstanding judgments and 20 percent if they have one.

“Our staff keeps a close watch on this situation, right from the time that we receive an inmate,” said Commissioner Goord.

“Inmates have a responsibility to make restitution, no matter how long it may take. Our employees monitor inmate accounts on a daily basis to ensure that is indeed the case.” 



Jeanne Nickels, a Central Office budget analyst who monitors inmate accounts, reviews an inmate's commitment information to see if money is owed to the courts or crime victims.

Inmate rule violations, 1992-2003			
Calendar Year	Tier II & III Infractions	Inmate Population	Infraction rate per 1K inmates
1992	105,485	61,284	1,721
1993	107,796	63,672	1,692
1994	111,208	65,681	1,693
1995	115,652	68,156	1,696
1996	112,393	68,934	1,630
1997	114,785	69,672	1,658
1998	110,381	69,882	1,580
1999	105,072	71,188	1,476
2000	97,180	71,172	1,365
2001	99,607	69,157	1,440
2002	90,313	67,115	1,346
2003	86,347	66,050	1,307

Misconduct drops in face of fines

When the Department first announced fines for inmate misconduct in 1992, it projected they would lead to a decrease in such offenses – reasoning that inmates earning an average of a buck a day would want to avoid paying \$5 fines.

Critics, instead, argued the number of charges would increase – complaining staff would write more tickets simply to increase revenues for a cash-strapped state.

The record shows the Department was right: Prisons are safer since the fees were imposed, at least measured by the 24 percent decline in the rate of Tier infractions shown above.

Inmates have apparently realized that misbehavior violates prison rules and threatens security – and has a markedly negative impact on their commissary accounts as well.

Convictions at Departmental hearings were on the rise at the time fees were imposed: they rose by roughly 10 percent in the first few years after the \$5-per-ticket fines were imposed.

But those numbers dropped off beginning in the mid-1990s as the number of inmates continued to climb. It is believed that the fines impacted that decline.

No fines are imposed against inmates committing the Tier I lowest level of infractions, such as being out of place or not maintaining tidy cells. Such offenses result in up to 13 days' loss of privileges.

Tier IIs are more serious infractions and inmates are accorded due process hearings. Punishments can range up to 30 days of cell confinement and loss of privileges. Offenses include less-serious instances of refusing to follow orders, minor fights and interference with staff.

Tier IIIs are accorded full hearings and punishments can include unlimited cell confinement as well as loss of good time. Offenses include assaults on staff or serious attacks on other inmates, weapons possession or the possession of illegal drugs. 



Tight security abets programming

Gouverneur

Just as with the many other medium-security facilities constructed in the 1980's, Gouverneur was a byproduct of the changes then being imposed upon the criminal justice system. A "crack" epidemic was sweeping not only the state but the entire country. There was a pressing need for medium-security beds to house and treat drug offenders who would double the size of the prison system. The Department designed a prototype prison and replicated that "cookie cutter" design to handle the unprecedented influx of inmates. Gouverneur is one of these "cookie cutter" facilities. "Big house" cell blocks for violent felons, made famous in old-time prison movies, gave way to barracks-style housing for nonviolent offenders.

Construction of the \$42.5 million Gouverneur prison began in December of 1989. The prison was constructed on approximately 100 acres of land on the outskirts of the village of Gouverneur in St. Lawrence County. The first staff members arrived at the facility in early October of 1990 and the first group of 25 inmates arrived on October 12, 1990. This was part of the first 400-bed phase of housing inmates at the new prison. The

initial inmates were housed in A-Block and were assigned to the mess hall, work detail and school programs. The recreation program was initially run out of a barracks-style housing unit and basketball was played on the walkway leading to the G-1 housing unit.

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In January of 1991, the recreation, activities and program buildings became available as the prison was phased into use as a 750-bed facility. The facility now houses approximately 870 inmates.

Within the secured perimeter of Gouverneur there are approximately 55 acres of land. The facility also maintains 45 acres of land outside the perimeter. There are 30 buildings on the property, including seven barracks-style housing units. Gouverneur also features a 10-bed medical unit and a 32-cell Special Housing Unit.

Gouverneur is also one of nine medium-security facilities across the state to house a maximum-security S-Block. These units are designed to segregate those inmates who choose to assault staff and others and disobey prison rules. There are 100, double-occupancy cells at each of these units. Gouverneur's \$12 million S-Block opened in November of 1997. The result of these S-Blocks has been safer prisons throughout New York.

Providing tools to overcome addiction

As with most other prisons across the state, Gouverneur offers a full range of academic programs. Inmates who do not have either a high school diploma or GED are now required to attend academic programming and attain at least the ninth-grade proficiency level in both reading and math skills before being eligible to take their GED exam. The previous proficiency levels in each of those disciplines was eighth grade, which is not considered adequate to succeed in today's society.

Ever since it opened its doors, Gouverneur's mission has been extensive and diverse, designed to help inmates get their lives back on track. And it touches a lot of bases in that focused, daily mission.

Among Gouverneur's varied program offerings is a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program. This program is designed for chemically-dependent inmates using the modality of a separate therapeutic community in connection with the Department's Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment (ASAT) manual.

The treatment community is the agent of change, acting



CO Michael Kiesznowski on duty in the sallyport tower.

in a highly organized and structured fashion so that its systems essentially constitute an environment to engage the participants in social learning. This model sets ethics of right living and recovery for the chemically-dependent inmate on the parallel paths of mental, emotional and physical health. Accountability of self and responsibility to others are the cornerstones to building a caring and nurturing environment to facilitate positive changes in Gouverneur's RSAT program.

The treatment teams are comprehensive, consisting of an ASAT Correction Counselor, two ASAT Program Assistants and a Keyboard Specialist. The team oversees the treatment community concept as its primary mission.

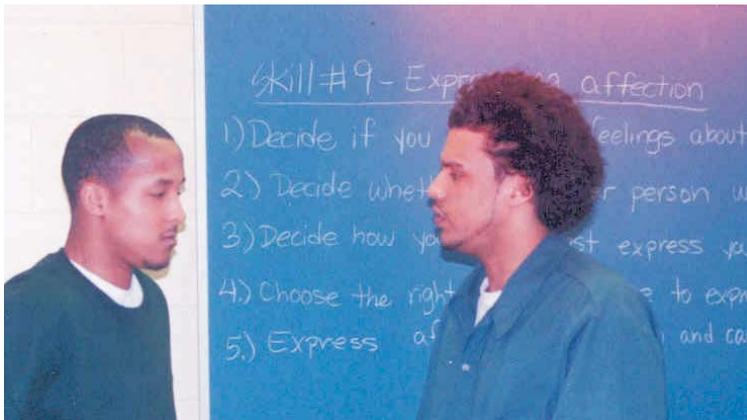
Staff also completes the standard documents required in the ASAT manual.

The RSAT program runs for six months. It has a three-step process of orientation, participation, and aftercare cadre components. The last is mutually agreed upon between staff and individual inmates in an effort to establish positive role models in a therapeutic community.

Other issues that are also covered include development of a cadre or positive peer role model from participants who have successfully completed the program. Also key is the ability to demonstrate a functional understanding in the nine competency areas outlined in the ASAT program manual.

The Family Services Program includes individual and family counseling to assist with the enhancement of familial relationships; parent education programs for inmates; children's play areas (Sesame Street Program) in, or adjacent to, visiting areas, and comfortable hospitality centers to accommodate incoming and departing visitors.

The goal of this program is to enrich and strengthen family relations in anticipation of the inmate's release from prison.



Inmate role players in the Aggression Replacement Training program.

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Academic, vocational programs abound

Cognizant of the fact that inmates need more than just education and treatment for their substance abuse/alcohol addictions, Gouverneur also offers a full plate of vocational programming. These varied courses are designed to provide inmates with the knowledge and basic skills they need in a variety of professions to help them get a job and support themselves and their families.

Among Gouverneur's vocational programs is one geared toward helping prepare inmates for a career in the electrical trades field. This course provides instruction in basic electrical skills with an emphasis on the installation and servicing of all types of residential and commercial wiring systems. Instruction is given on code interpretation, installation and servicing of circuits and controls, use of testing equipment and the reading of architectural drawings and wiring schematics.

Gouverneur's electrical trades course entails self-paced individual instruction. Upon successful completion of this course, inmates are deemed qualified to be considered for an entry-level position in the profession. They can then apply for jobs like residential electrician, motor repairer, motor control assembler, tool crib attendant, electrician's helper, inventory clerk and tool repairer.

A state Department of Labor (DOL) apprenticeship program in electrical trades is also available to Gouverneur inmates enrolled in the program. Upon completing that advanced phase of the program, inmates enhance their chances of securing employment upon release.

Gouverneur also offers a building maintenance program.



Teacher IV Robyn Bickelhaupt tutors inmate in reading.

This course provides students with the fundamental skills required to make minor repairs in carpentry, masonry, electricity and plumbing. The course provides the inmates with entry-level skills in the profession.

As with the facility's electrical trades vocational program, the length of the building maintenance program varies as it's also tied to self-paced individualized instruction to develop competencies in the various fields that are offered. A DOL apprenticeship program in building maintenance is also available.

Upon successful completion of the course, inmates can apply for jobs such as an acoustical carpenter, mason's or plumber's helper, drywall taper or applicator, light fixture serviceman, inventory clerk and tool crib attendant.

Gouverneur also offers a vocational course in welding. Inmates in this program are taught various techniques of cutting and welding. The inmates are schooled on the control of equipment in the various positions of welding as well as many types of joints, beads, welds and brazes. The course also includes instruction in blueprint reading and working from layouts and diagrams.

Inmates who are visually or hearing impaired, are color blind, have asthma or are missing a limb may be prohibited from participation in the course.

Successful completion of the course enables inmates to apply for jobs like production or arc welder, inventory clerk and layout worker.

A vocational course in custodial maintenance is also available at Gouverneur. This program emphasizes various custodial topics including floor care, carpet and fabric care, upholstery care, the proper use of sanitation chemicals, window care, rest room care and the safe use and operation of power cleaning equipment.

The goal of Gouverneur's custodial maintenance program is to develop inmate competencies in various entry-level skills. Among the job titles that inmates can qualify for upon completion of the course are commercial or industrial cleaner, industrial sweeper, inventory clerk, custodian, floor waxer, tool crib attendant and window cleaner.

Another vocational offering on the Gouverneur menu is its floor covering program. This covers the installation of most floor covering materials including types of carpeting, floor tiles, sheet goods, wall tile and quarry slate. The inmates also learn layout and measurement, floor preparation, maintenance, repair and job estimation.

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This program also offers a DOL apprenticeship program. Upon completion of the course, inmates are deemed qualified to apply for jobs like carpet/floor layer, inventory clerk, linoleum/vinyl layer, ceramic tile setter and tool crib attendant.

Another one of Gouverneur's vocational courses is its masonry program. Inmates are taught the fundamentals of wall construction, mixing mortar and learning to work with brick, cinder blocks, cement blocks and concrete. The inmates also learn blueprint reading and trade mathematics.

Upon completion of the course, the inmates can apply for jobs such as a cement mason, brick layer, stone mason and inventory clerk.

Helping others one day at a time

As is the case with other prisons across New York, staff and inmates at Gouverneur do not operate in a vacuum. They are constantly pitching in to help the needy in communities surrounding the prison and community residents, in kind, have returned those frequent favors.

Every Saturday and Sunday, for instance, visitors are greeted at Gouverneur's hospitality center by area volunteers. Among other duties, these volunteers verse family members on proper visiting policies and procedures. They also provide them with a place to freshen up after what was usually a long bus trip up north to spend some time with a loved one.

Volunteers from AA also visit the prison weekly to meet with two inmate groups to assist them in combating their alcohol and substance abuse addictions. There are approximately 15 inmates in each group, each of which is overseen by a separate volunteer.

The Northern Regional Center for Independent Living also plays a key role in helping Gouverneur inmates get their lives back in order. The group regularly dispatches employees to the facility to provide inmates with HIV/AIDS education to augment the education regularly provided by facility staff.

Volunteers from many religious groups are also frequent visitors to Gouverneur. Another group of volunteers comes to the facility each month to conduct an alternatives to violence program. About 25 inmates a month take part in this training session.

The continued efforts of staff and inmates at Gouverneur to improve the community can be clearly seen throughout the region, and for that local residents are extremely thankful. Staff members are active members of their communities. They hold regular fund-raisers to assist their neighbors in need, serve as volunteer firefighters and sports coaches, volunteer their time at community food



Brian Morley, Vocational Instructor IV, instructs an inmate (at left) in building an arch in masonry shop.

banks and soup kitchens and serve on municipal and community advisory boards.

The letters of appreciation never seem to stop making their way into the Superintendent's office at Gouverneur. Recently, for instance, staff and inmates in the facility's building maintenance teamed up with G.W. White and Son, a local lumber retailer, to construct planters to spruce up the Village Park on Main Street.

The three-by-three-foot planters were built with pressure-treated lumber and should stand the test of time.

The facility has also donated benches and trash receptacles for the ongoing beautification of downtown Gouverneur.

One particular recent project of pride involved the facility again teaming up with G.W. White. Using lumber donated by the company, the facility constructed a set of sturdy bleachers for the Little League ballfields at the Riverview Recreational Park in the village.

It was an offering that was greatly appreciated.

"The quality and workmanship of the bleachers is exceptional," said Michael Burgess, vice president of the Greater Gouverneur Area Recreation Center, Inc. "The addition of these bleachers to our recreational park has allowed fans to watch our Little League games in a more comfortable setting."

Every year, staff and inmates at prisons across the state participate in Make a Difference Day activities to benefit the needy in their communities. Staff at Gouverneur have held several fund-raisers to benefit three local organizations: the St. Lawrence County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, the Gouverneur Neighborhood Center and Hospice of St. Lawrence Valley. Each agency received \$380. Inmates also donated \$150 to the Gouverneur Recreation Center.



Sgt. Andrew Mousaw and Keyboard Specialist Kim Felix review paperwork.

The inmates get in the game of making a difference in the community in other ways as well. In an effort to assist at-risk local youth and prevent them from eventually winding up in prison, Gouverneur inmates, under the supervision of programming and security staff, conduct regular Youth Assistance Program (YAP) sessions at the facility. Unlike the often-berated "Scared Straight" program, YAP is specifically designed to provide positive guidance and direction to at-risk youth in a non-judgmental and reinforcing manner.

During the program, inmates openly relate their own improper decisions and behavior patterns that ultimately led to their incarceration. The at-risk youths in the program are referred by the Department of Social Services, Family Court, school districts and community-based organizations. 

Facility Highlights

Comptroller Hevesi commends payroll operations at 48 facilities

Training Academy earns recognition in both statewide, agency categories

DOCS made an impressive showing in the New York State Comptroller's Payroll Achievement Awards, which recognized accomplishment in timely and efficient payroll management.

The first-ever awards, presented January 13 in Albany, are the culmination of an inter-agency effort launched by the NYS Payroll Users Group to help state payroll departments learn from each other and develop best practices and standards, said Central Office payroll clerk Sandra Downey.

Bruce Johnson, DOCS Director of Financial Administration, said record-keeping and management do matter to employees. Employees may not see the work of payroll officers on a daily basis, but "when an appointment is late, it's the employee who is impacted, most often in a negative way."

The Department earned four of the 12 statewide awards from the Office of State Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi. The Training Academy payroll office, Clinton and Bayview received awards for Outstanding Performance for on-time appointments. Rochester was honored for Distinguished Performance for on-time separations.

In the agency award category in which individual units within large agencies were measured against one another, the Training Academy was honored for Best Overall Performance within DOCS.

The 45 facilities earning honorable mention for on-time processing of personnel changes are Adirondack, Altona, Arthur Kill, Auburn, Bare Hill, Beacon, Buffalo, Butler, Cape Vincent, Collins, Chateaugay, Downstate, Eastern, Edgecombe, Fulton, Gabriels, Georgetown, Gouverneur, Gowanda and Greene, Green Haven, Groveland, Hale Creek, Hudson, Marcy, Mid-Orange, Mid-State, Monterey, Moriah, Mt. McGregor, Oneida, Orleans, Pharsalia, Queensboro, Riverview, Shawangunk, Southport, Sullivan, Summit, Ulster, Upstate, Wallkill, Washington, Watertown and Woodbourne. The New York City central payroll office was also honored.

Mr. Johnson said the likely immediate impact of the awards on facilities that were not recognized will be self analysis, since many factors influence performance and not all of them are within a payroll staff's control. "We are always watching for indications that some facility or business office area needs training or other help, and this report card, for lack of another term, will tell us where to look more closely," he said.

The Payroll Users Group, which was formed four years ago, established the Subcommittee on Performance Measures and Standards to assess performance, evaluate business processes and develop methods to improve their operations. From those

meetings came the development of agency report cards to measure how well they were performing in processing employees onto or off their payrolls. The awards given in January are a result of those evaluations.

Two major categories were developed: On-time appointments and on-time separations, recognizing that delays in the former can cause late paychecks and additional expenses to correct records. Delays in the latter can result in unearned paychecks

and extra expenses in trying to recover them.

Agencies were evaluated by the volume of their payroll transactions (high, medium and low) on both a statewide basis and within peer groups.

Ms. Downey said the awards are a tribute to the diligence, persistence and attention to detail that are prerequisites for maintaining quality payroll records. Strong communication between the personnel and payroll departments is also essential for top performance, she said.

"We do have selected payroll staff in the facilities that do training and provide assistance to groups of facilities," Mr. Johnson said. "We also do some training from Central Office. As we review the reports we may identify some facilities in need of additional training."

He cautioned, however, that because circumstances vary among facilities, "I don't think there are any ready steps or procedures that we can simply pick up from the places that received recognition and drop into the ones that didn't." 



Shown accepting an award from Comptroller Alan G. Hevesi (center) are (from left) Central Office payroll workers Randy Solon, Sandy Downey, Joanne Brunner and Laurie Speech.

Taconic voc instructor uses 'boot camp' strategy to teach math

For the past 14 years, Vocational Instructor Patricia Ennis has overseen Taconic's general business course, the facility's only vocational course but one of the Department's most successful.

For Ms. Ennis, who's frequently fielding calls and receiving letters from appreciative course graduates who have found steady employment on the outside in a variety of fields and have stayed out of trouble, the job has truly been a labor of love.

"You can get skills in corrections and people do," said Ms. Ennis. "They call me up so excited when they're able to get a job after they're released from prison based on what they were able to learn while enrolled in this course. I enjoy taking people in a shame-based environment and being able to show them that they're good people and that they can get the skills to get a good-paying job when they're released from prison."

A former Catholic nun, Ms. Ennis previously worked for the Educational Opportunity Center in Rochester, where she taught similar business skills to women who were receiving tax assistance under Aid to Dependent Children. Her goal there, as it is with the female inmates at Taconic, was the same: provide marketable and varied job skills to people who don't have many in the hopes they can stay off the welfare rolls and make a good living for themselves and their families.

"Officials in Rochester wanted to get jobs for these women and that's just what we did," said Ms. Ennis. "It's a lot easier to make it on the outside when you have the skills and training that employers are looking for."

Ms. Ennis said her initial primary focus is to train inmates in math skills through the use of calculators, adding machines and other equipment. She said the students are constantly peppered with decimal, percentage and other math problems.

"I call it boot camp," she said. "I get their heads moving again and keep them moving. (Math skills) are the most market-

able skills out there."

But the Department's general business course is about much more than just math. Ms. Ennis and other vocational instructors frequently have to wear several different hats and head in varied directions when dealing with their students, depending on what stage of progress they have achieved. In essence, it's self-paced individualized instruction to develop student competencies in various entry level skills.



Vocational Instructor Ennis with inmate-student.

Among other things, the course provides inmates with instruction on office equipment like typewriters, computer terminal keyboards (inmates do not have access to the Internet), transcribers and printers. They are also instructed in shorthand, filing, Microsoft Word and mailing procedures.

Ms. Ennis said the varied instruction qualifies inmates who complete the course for a wide range of office jobs like bookkeeper, general clerk, desktop publisher, stenographer and dictation machine translator. Upon completion of certain pre-determined criteria, inmates receive certification from the state Department of Labor that will assist them in getting a job by attesting to their qualifications.

Because the office skills she passes along to inmates are "perishable," Ms. Ennis noted that the only inmates placed in

her course are those within 18 months of possible release. The number of disciplines that an inmate wants to be versed in is entirely up to them; Ms. Ennis said she prods them to achieve all they can in her course because the more they know, the better their chances of gainful employment.

"One of the things I really like about my job is that I'm a people person. I really like to give these women a sense of hope and show them that they can make it on the outside," said Ms. Ennis. "And another one of the things that's really good about this course is that it provides the inmates with 'hands-on' experience." 

For whom does the bell toll? Auburn's now ringing again

Like the proverbial cat, Auburn's historic bell keeps coming back to life.

Last year the Cayuga Museum of History and Art asked the facility to contribute anything it could to a special exhibit "Both Sides of the Wall: Auburn and Its Prisons." The exhibit, which ran from April 12 through Aug. 31 last year, detailed the history of the prison, whose cornerstone was laid in 1816, and the relationship between the prison and the city.

One item sent was the large black bell that had been stationed, unused and largely ignored, on the prison's front lawn for decades – its location there being an interesting story in and of itself, which we get to later in this story.

Hundreds of visitors to the exhibit viewed what appeared to be a rather unremarkable cast iron bell. When the exhibit closed the bell was packed up for its return the facility. While in transit the framework holding the bell collapsed.

Now the tale gets interesting.

Vocational instructor Joe Maurizzio and vocational welding instructor Jim Perry, together with their inmate crews, undertook the job of repairing the bell framework. While they were at it, they decided to peel away generations of dirt, grime and pollution to determine if the bell was, in fact, as common as it appeared to be. Inmates scraped, sand blasted and otherwise cleaned the bell. What emerged from their work was solid bronze.

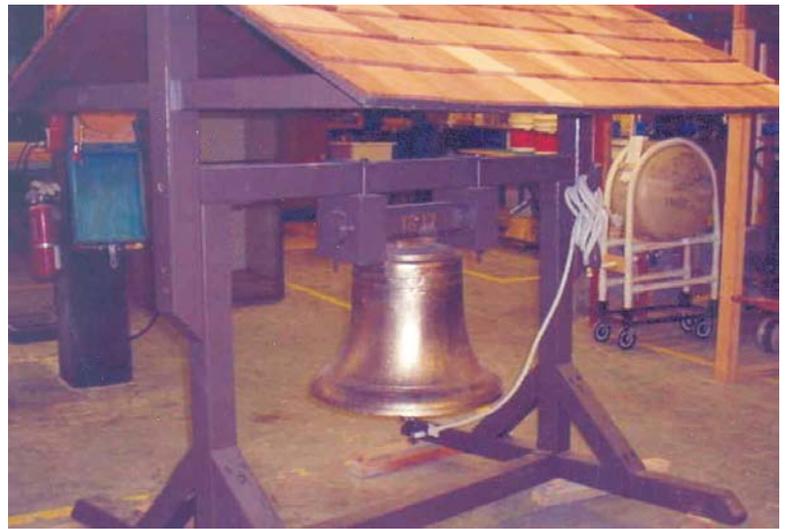
The instructors had inmates polish the bronze bell to a high gloss and coat it to prevent the sort of discoloration that had masked its identity for so many years. With its framework repaired, the bell once again sits on Auburn's front lawn, ready to perform special duty.

Retired Deputy Superintendent John N. Miskell provides this account of the bell's fascinating history:

One Monday morning in the spring of 1970, while poring over the weekend's reports of inmate violations, then-Superintendent John T. Deegan spotted something unusual. An officer reported finding five gallons of home brew "bubbling under the bell" in the former steel shop building, now used for miscellaneous storage.

As Mr. Miskell relates in his 1992 monograph *The Bell: Auburn Prison*, "The superintendent put the report down and thought for a moment about manually operated bells in use in the prison prior to the installation of a system of electrically operated alarm and call bells and watchman's clocks in 1890."

Manually operated bells were rung several times during the day to direct prison activities, but nothing at Auburn would have been large enough to conceal a five-gallon pail. The reporting officer, Jack Farrington, had described needing help to move the bell. The warden summoned Officer Farrington, who confirmed the details of his written report, mentioned it had taken him some time to find the strong-smelling mixture and then added an old-timer's recollection.



The Auburn bell rests within its restored housing. It has been returned to its place of honor in front of the prison.

As it turns out, the bell had been moved to the steel shop a dozen years previously. It had been discovered under a pile of debris in the basement of a ward in the women's prison complex, scheduled for demolition to make way for a new school building.

Mr. Deegan went back in memory to his boyhood in Auburn. He remembered a free-hanging bell in bell tower of the original administration building. Above the bell, on a separate platform, stood the statue of the Revolutionary War soldier known as "Copper John" (who is on the DOCS TODAY masthead atop page 1).

The bell was originally used to warn the citizens of Auburn if there was trouble inside the prison and to summon local militia volunteers, who were expected to rush to the scene if help was needed.

When the old administration building was replaced during major renovation in the 1930s, "Copper John" rose to prominence at the top of the new building – but the bell was rendered obsolete by an electric siren.

Were the bell in the tower, removed some 40 years earlier, and the bell in the old steel shop one and the same?

Over the next few days, aided by old photographs and a closer examination of a cleaned-up bell, the match was confirmed. It was determined to be made of rough bronze, stood 24 inches tall and weighed 250 pounds.

Further detective work located the bell's clapper, which was reattached. Art instructor John Griffin lettered the year 1817 on the bell's yoke to commemorate the year the first inmates were committed to Auburn. Mr. Miskell concludes the bell was hung in the administration building belfry in 1822.

The superintendent directed the bell be placed on the front lawn so it would not be lost again.

And there it has sat for more than 30 years, in a sense hidden in plain view.

The bell will return to service as a memorial to Auburn staff. At the wishes of the family, it will be rung in honor when an Auburn retiree or employee dies. 

Eastern expands production of books for the visually impaired

Eastern has stepped up its production of large-print books for visually-impaired students by expanding the number of inmate student-workers and posting its catalogue of 50-plus titles on a national database.

“We’ve gotten the process down to the point where we can produce large-print books a lot more quickly than when we started this program in July of 2002,” said Eastern Vocational Supervisor John Cosh. “At the same time, if somebody wants a book that we’ve already converted, we can get it to them a lot more quickly now because we won’t be starting from scratch. This program has been very well-received and we’re proud of what we’re doing here at Eastern.”

Since last summer, the number of inmates working in the large-print book shop has nearly doubled to 50 under the direction of Vocational Instructor Stanley Drownowski. The inmates are evenly split between morning and afternoon crews.

The large-print book program complements Eastern’s well-regarded Braille Transcription Program, where another 50 inmates under the direction of Vocational Instructor Kelly Dubois produce materials in Braille for students, inmates and Department employees. That program dates to 1995.

The increase in the inmate workforce, coupled with some subtle refinements and changes in the production process since the inception of the large-print book program, has helped fuel what has become an aggressive output schedule, according to Mr. Cosh.

Under the current arrangement, once a large-print book has been completed by inmates and sent to the requesting educator, its title is then forwarded to the Louisville, Ky.-based Louis Database and placed on the American Printing House for the Blind website (www.aph.org). Teachers can check the list for titles that meet their needs. If they find a match they can contact Eastern directly to place an order.

Since all the completed large-print books are stored on facility computers, Mr. Cosh said, requests for copies can be satisfied quickly. “It’s taken us a while to refine and improve the

production process but we’ve got it working pretty well right now,” he said.

He said requests typically come on referrals from the Batavia School for the Blind and other state agencies that serve the visually impaired.

Mr. Cosh said the facility charges a “nominal” fee for each book to offset the cost of materials and production.



Eastern inmates pack up large-print books for shipment.

Large-print books are printed on standard 8½-by-11-inch paper, ivory colored for ease in reading. Whereas a typical book uses 12-font type size, the books produced at Eastern are usually printed in 18-font or larger type, depending on need.

The large-print books are generally used by students from grade school through the college level, but Mr. Cosh said special orders are also filled.

The production is a multi-step process. After books to be converted are received at Eastern, they are separated into various sections and given to members of the inmate publishing team. Each inmate follows any special instructions from the requesting teacher

about type size, graphics or other features. Each page is then individually scanned, formatted, proofread, edited and printed.

Any graphic that cannot be adequately represented in standard book size is reproduced on 11-by-17-inch paper and inserted as a fold out. To hold down costs, graphics are produced in gray-scale, a more precise method of black and white. Color graphics are used only when specifically requested.

Once approximately 250 pages in the large-print format are printed, they are put into a volume, bound, and placed in a hard cover for packaging and shipment. A normal book of 200 to 300 pages typically expands to nearly 750 pages in three volumes when converted to large print.

“Large-print was a great addition to the vocational program at Eastern and a logical extension of the Braille program,” said Superintendent Dave Miller. “It accomplishes three goals: It serves people in need, the clients who would not otherwise receive these books. It provides inmates with viable skills, a sense of responsibility and a sense of giving back. And it promotes Eastern in the community, giving me a good program to brag about.” 

Transitions

February 2004

Names Title Facility

Promotions

Roger T. Dubray Plant Utilities Engineer 1 Adirondack
Darlene M. Weed. Clerk 2 Coxsackie
Deborah R. Maly Counselor Aide Trainee Downstate
Daniel Wisneski General Mechanic Elmira
Elaine M. Walters Correction Counselor. Elmira
Frank J. Rhodes Senior Correction Counselor . Five Points
James E. Terryberry Maintenance Supervisor 1 . . Five Points
Gail Rookey Inmate Records Coordinator 1 Gouverneur
Julie Daniel. Supr Inmate Griev Trainee . . Great Meadow
Thomas B. Corcoran Plant Superintendent B. Great Meadow
Joann M. Rosario Administrative Aide Green Haven
Susan M. Verbeke Senior Counselor. Greene
Michael Winney Motor Vehicle Operator. . . . Hale Creek
Michael G. Morgan Maintenance Supervisor 1 . . Main Office
Karen S. Lemin. Administrative Aide. Main Office
Diana LaBounty Purchasing Agent Main Office
Peter M. Stenson. Assist Dir Indus Managemnt . Main Office
Thomas P. McQuade. Facilities Planner 3 Main Office
Margaret McRoberts Coord Pre-release Services . Main Office
Irene Purificato Associate Budgeting Analyst . Main Office
Paul T. Havranek. Assist Industrial Supt Mid-Orange
Lorrie A. Manuele Clerk 2 Mohawk
Aleksandr B. Spektor. Plant Utilities Engineer 1 . . . Queensboro
Daniel F. Conlin Vocational Instructor 1 Sing Sing
Patricia A. Howe Principal Account Clerk. . . . Southport
Anitha Cherian Calculations Clerk 2 Taconic
Leslie A. Sawyer Counselor Aide Trainee (Sp) . Ulster
Michael T. Guldán Dentist 3 Upstate
Charlene Dwyer Payroll Clerk 3 Upstate
Kevin P. Howe Head Cook Upstate
Lloyd Lamore. Head Cook Upstate
Ronald J. Moore Ed Sup (Vocational) Washington
Timothy D. Locastro Vocational Instructor 1 Willard
Paul Piccolo Correction Lieutenant Shawangunk
Edward Mydosch Correction Lieutenant Sing Sing

Retirements

Paul P. Waldmiller, Sr. Indus Training Supr 2 (MPM). Attica
Charles R. Parker Stores Clerk 1 Georgetown
Anita C. Stungis Principal Stores Clerk Eastern
Paul Jordan General Mechanic Elmira
Linda L. Coelln Secretary 1 Fishkill
Arthur J. Cowan Stores Clerk 1 Five Points
George Niebler Ed Supr (Vocational) Great Meadow

Sandra Renihan Principal Clerk Green Haven
Eugene Deangelis Laundry Supervisor. Greene
Nancy W. Smith Keyboard Specialist 1 Livingston
Thomas R. Smith. Tandem Trailer Operator . . . Main Office
Jane Connor Keyboard Specialist 2 Mid-State
Cathy M. Jubis Secretary 1 Mid-State
Kathy J. Britton Senior Mail & Supply Clerk . Mid-State
Cynthia Zeeb Nurse 2. Otisville
Roberta J. Driscoll Keyboard Specialist 1 Riverview
Virginia Falu Teacher 4 Shawangunk
Sandra C. H. Mok Nurse 2. Taconic
Rose Marie Zaferes Clerk 2 Ulster
R. Dekalb. General Mechanic Washington
Danny L. Huddleston. Correction Counselor. Watertown
Wallace H. Thomas, Jr. Correction Captain Mt. McGregor
Charles Ross. Correction Lieutenant Gowanda
Michael E. Hadden Correction Sergeant Clinton
Philip Patnode Correction Sergeant Clinton
John R. Vantassel Correction Sergeant Fishkill
Stephen Prokrym. Correction Sergeant Greene
William Tonic. Correction Sergeant Watertown
James Gold Correction Officer. Arthur Kill
Karl H. Farquharson Correction Officer. Bayview
Beverly Moses Correction Officer. Beacon
Chester McConnell, Jr. Correction Officer. Cape Vincent
Winston Decoste Correction Officer. Chateaugay
Raymond Brokos. Correction Officer. Clinton
Lawrence J. Brooks Correction Officer. Clinton
Mitchell Tyson Correction Officer. Edgecombe
Lawrence E. Romen Correction Officer. Elmira
Harold Smith Correction Officer. Greene
Gregory Stinzianni Correction Officer. Hale Creek
Guy Laurent Correction Officer. Mid-Orange
Gary Ketcham Correction Officer. Otisville
Alfred Bailey Correction Officer. Southport
Craig Case Correction Officer. Sullivan
Frederick G. Stedner Correction Officer. Ulster
David Wells Correction Officer. Ulster
Patricia M. Higgins Correction Officer. Walkkill
Bernard Young Correction Officer. Woodbourne

Deaths

Donna F. Coyle. Nurse 2. Auburn
Thomas Novak Plant Utilities Engineer 1 . . . Walkkill
William D. Redding. Correction Sergeant Hudson
Michael J. Hedderman Correction Officer. Eastern
James H. Wilson Correction Officer. Mid-Orange

Houses built by Collins vocational shop inmates are for the birds

There were bright smiles on the faces of hundreds of young children who attended the Niagara County Wildlife Festival in Niagara Falls.

And their glee was the direct result of the ongoing efforts of staff and inmates at Collins and others in the region .

This year, inmates in Vocational Instructor Robert Peglowski's building maintenance class built more than 500 bluebird house wooden model kits for the Safari Club, an environmental conservation advocate. In turn, many of those kits were given to children at the festival.

Mr. Peglowski's inmates also built 375 bluebird houses for the Safari Club. Those houses were erected throughout the western part of the state to provide bluebirds, the state's official bird, with a safe place that they could call home.

Staff and inmates at Collins also constructed hundreds of other bluebird house model kits for area schools and local Cub Scout and Boy Scout organizations.

Collins inmates first began building bluebird houses for the Safari Club five years ago and built additional houses the following year. The next year, the inmates switched their focus to building bat houses, at the request of the Safari Club and other environmentalists, to help cut down on the mosquito population and reduce the spread of West Nile virus in the region. Bats can consume thousands of mosquitos on any given night, so it seemed a worthy venture. Last year, Collins staff and inmates shifted their focus back to building bluebird houses and began

constructing the wooden model kits as well.

"They've just done a great job for us and others over there at Collins," said Robert Keicher, regional vice president for the Safari Club. "We've enjoyed a great relationship for five years now and we look forward to building on that relationship in the future."

Under the arrangement between the Safari Club and Collins, the organization provides the lumber and the screws for the birdhouses. They also provide the cellophane packaging which is needed for the model kits.



Vocational Instructor Robert Peglowski (left) monitors Collins inmates as they construct bluebird houses.

"We're glad to be able to help the Safari Club and others in the area in the spirit of conservation," said Collins Superintendent James Berbery. "We've always tried to have a positive impact in the community and we've been able to achieve that through programs like this one."

Mr. Keicher said continued development in western New York and elsewhere has depleted many of the natural habitats that bluebirds used to call home, hence the need for a helping hand from Collins to provide them

with adequate places to nest and live. He said the birdhouses that are constructed by the Collins inmates are specifically designed to prevent larger predators like starlings from entering the domicile and wreaking havoc.

"I'm just amazed at the job that they have been able to do and the amount of houses and kits that they've produced," said Mr. Keicher. "It benefits the entire area."

Mr. Keicher said he's been especially impressed with the model kits that have been produced at Collins, saying they've been a really big hit with area children.

"They just love it when we give them one of those models," said Mr. Keicher. "And building those bluebird houses is something that the entire family can enjoy together."

Besides benefitting the environment and bringing joy to local children, Mr. Peglowski said the program has other benefits.

"The inmates are getting some hands-on experience that hopefully will benefit them when they're released from prison," said Mr. Peglowski. "A lot of these inmates have never handled any type of tool in their lives and this is helping to give them some experience and self-confidence." 

On the web ...

Readers with Internet access can obtain information on the world wide web from the offices of both Governor Pataki and Commissioner Goord. Their addresses:

Governor Pataki: <http://www.state.ny.us>

Commissioner Goord: <http://www.docs.state.ny.us>

Colorized editions of DOCS|TODAY, beginning with the January 2003 edition, now appear on the DOCS website. Editions are posted as PDFs when they are sent to the Elmira print shop for publication. 

20th annual DOCS Employee Olympics slated for June 8-12

**Entry deadline May 14 for competitors;
Long drive golf added, fishing expanded**

Mark your calendars for June 8-12 and the 20th annual DOCS Employee Olympics.

In addition to perennially popular games such as softball, golf and a variety of other competitions, Olympics Director Dave Barringer said two new events will make their debut this year, and Olympics shirts will feature a commemorative anniversary logo.

Based on the success of the Saratoga Lake competition, the fishing event will be expanded to include the Hudson River Fishing Tournament. The event is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9 beginning at 6 a.m., with anglers entering the water from the boat ramps at the Henry Hudson Park in the Town of Bethlehem on the west side of the river.

Mr. Barringer said the Hudson River tournament will have two divisions – one for striped bass, the other for the largest total combined weight of three fish excluding striped bass. Fishermen can enter either or both events.

Also new this year is a Long Drive Golf Competition on Tuesday, June 8 at 4 p.m. at Van Patten Golf Course in Clifton Park. Medals will be awarded for both men and women in the same brackets used for the 36-hole event.

Mr. Barringer noted the Olympics Committee last year implemented a policy giving facility coordinators more responsibility for reviewing applications prior to submission. Coordinators were also given email addresses to facilitate the exchange of information.

“This system worked very well, particularly in preparing team rosters, allowing brackets for softball and basketball to be definitively prepared much sooner than in the past,” he said. “Since the system was so successful, the Committee has decided to extend it to include volleyball. In 2004, for the first time, all volleyball events will be bracketed prior to the games.”

With facility coordinators receiving the dates and times of all opening round volleyball games, teams will be better able to plan their days off and travel arrangements and the Committee will be able to schedule courts and referees more efficiently.

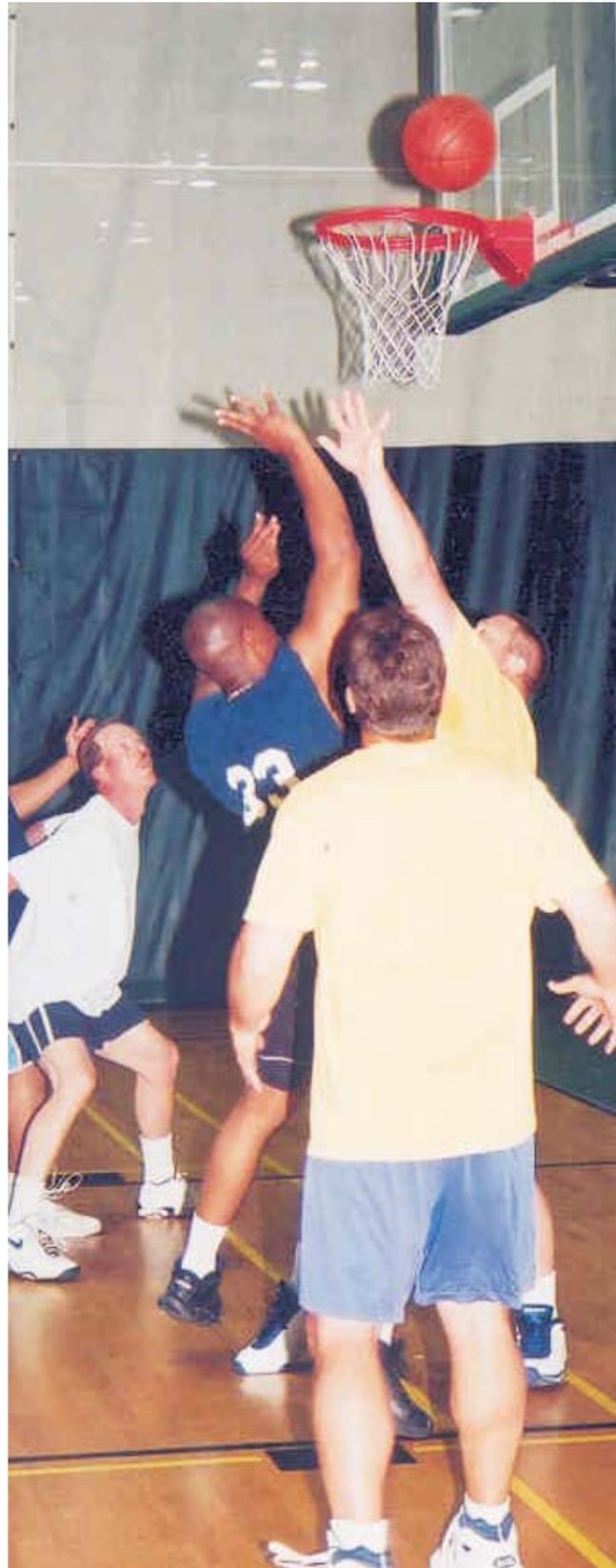
Mr. Barringer said the home away from home for the 2004 Games will again be the Best Western Inn in Albany. He encouraged prospective Olympians to reserve rooms there early and to mention the Games to receive the special Olympic discount.

Golfers should be aware that entries for the 36-hole event will be limited to the first 144 applications. As with the Scramble event, applications will be processed in the order in which they are received and entries will be returned once the limit has been reached, he said. He urged golfers to pay particular attention to both fees and the information regarding partners and foursomes so their applications can be processed quickly.

For the fifth year in succession the Games coincide with the Department’s annual Memorial Service and Medals Ceremony, to be held Thursday afternoon at the Training Academy in conjunction with the Color Guard competition. The celebration will continue that evening with the Olympic picnic on the grounds of the Academy, where contestants will compete in arm wrestling, tug-of-war and a three-point shot event.

More than 1,500 employees and retirees participated in last year’s Olympics, when Coxsackie became only the third facility ever to capture the Commissioner’s Trophy two years in a row.

Mr. Barringer reminded participants to submit their applications through their facility coordinators. Entry deadline is May 14. 



Basketball remains a popular Olympic sport.