DOCS TODAY

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U.S. calls DOCS 'citizen soldiers' to duty

Vigilance and local assistance are hallmarks of the overseas mission of both the National Guard and Army Reserve, who today count 273 DOCS employees among their ranks. Last year, Clinton CO Kenneth Neyland (above) stood his post at an M-60 atop a Hummer in Bosnia while Albion CO Juan Morales (below, fourth from right) posed with Afghani residents after delivering supplies to a local school.

DOCS employees defend America at home, overseas

National Guard, reserve activations now include 273 of our coworkers

This month's DOCS|TODAY features the roles our employees continue to play in the defense of our homeland and in helping to disarm the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein.

Whether they are on active duty or have completed their tours stateside or in the Mideast, all 32,000 employees of this Department are proud of the role being played by hundreds our colleagues who also serve in the National Guard and reserves.

Each day, our employees protect and defend New Yorkers simply by coming to work.

Now, the formerly quiet service performed by 848 employees as members of our armed forces is being highlighted around the world as it focuses on Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Nearly 570 employees have been activated 1,712 times since the terrorist attacks of 9-11.

Top stories this month:

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As of April first, 273 of our employees remain on active duty. They are among the 4,000-plus New Yorkers activated to protect our nation at home or abroad.

I share your pride in each one of them. And we thank their families and loved ones for their sacrifice as well.

I am equally proud of our employees who have stepped forward to fill in for our coworkers serving in our nation's defense.

The articles that begin on page 4 tell the stories of military duties performed by our staff that is representative of that performed by hundreds of our coworkers.

Commissioner Goord (far left) joined Governor Pataki (center) and other officials in planning security for all New Yorkers.

But they tell of more than just their individual performance: they speak of the patriotism, commitment and valor of all Americans serving in the National Guard and Army Reserves.

We are equally proud of the service performed by some of our CERT members providing security along New York City's watershed and at some government buildings in Albany.

We have already seen a reduction in staff assigned to those duties and, in the coming few months, will see all of them replaced by other agencies taking over those duties.

As they return to their facility duties, our staffing will be augmented this summer by the two classes of Correction Officer recruits now undergoing training at the Albany Academy.

We are also implementing initiatives – such as coordinating and consolidating inmate medical transports on a hub basis rather than by individual facilities – that will consolidate duties so we can redirect security staff to other essential assignments.

As the downsizing of the system continues, we have ensured that staff is reduced only after the inmate population drops. We have vacated 63 percent of targeted beds, while attrition has reduced 57 percent of the security jobs associated with them.

As promised, staff safety and facility security continue to be our highest priorities while meeting our agency mission.

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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 watch 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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Sing Sing begins vacating 536 medium-security beds

Transfer lists to accommodate staff moves, many inmates stay in mid-Hudson region

The downsizing of the system continued last month with the first transfers of medium-security inmates and staff from Sing Sing's medium-security compound, often referred to as Tappan.

The decision to vacate all of Sing Sing's 536 medium-security beds was based on:

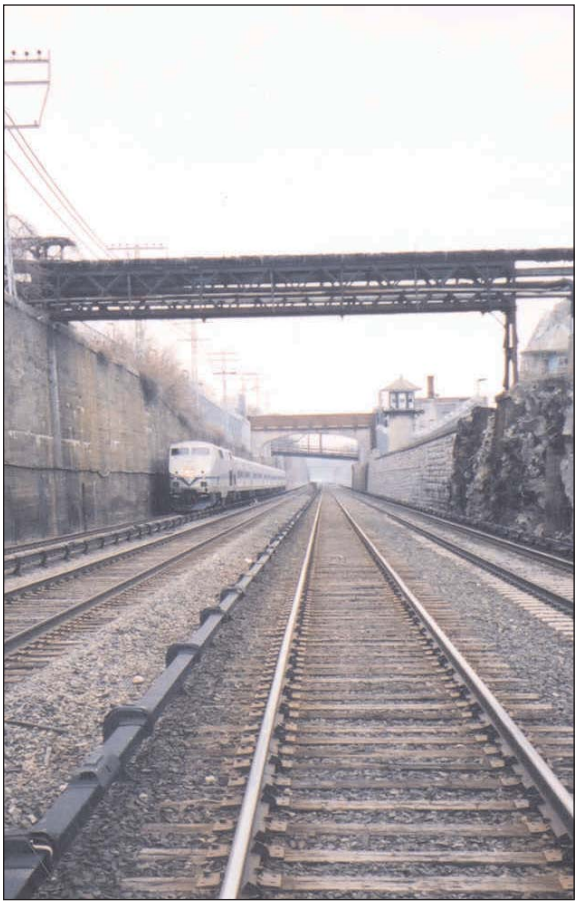
- The 200 security staff on reassignment lists out of Sing Sing: most are new Officers who came here as recruits, but now want to leave expensive Westchester County, and return closer to their homes across the state.
- The need for costly renovation for any long-term use of the medium-security compound.
- The desire to make more of the existing program slots available to Sing Sing's 1,804 maximum-security inmates.

Staff will attrit out of Sing Sing as inmates are transferred. As inmates leave, staff will be assigned to other facilities, allowing DOCS to fill their vacancies without the need to hire new staff.

Sing Sing's medium-security inmates will be transferred out as medium-security housing is identified in the mid-Hudson region to relocate them.

The first 78 inmates left on April 15, when the 10-3 unit was vacated. More inmates were scheduled to leave in late April after DOCS|TODAY went to press.

Most of the medium-security living quarters house roughly 78 inmates and have nine Officers assigned there to cover all shifts plus relief. Transfers are being made by floors to maximize the number of staff that can be reassigned.



Northbound train passes through Sing Sing.

Vacating the beds at Sing Sing will allow for the attrition of 86 Officers and three Sergeants. Program, medical and support staff will also be reduced, by 32 positions, as the population declines.

"We are keeping our promise that staff reductions will occur by attrition," said Commissioner Goord. "Talk of vacating these beds first surfaced during 2002's budget discussions. Some staff saw the handwriting on the wall and transferred out of Ossining. That will make it easier for us to attrit positions now as we vacate these beds."

Commissioner Goord added, "Closing beds where we can reassign staff to vacant positions maintains our security without necessitating new hires in the face of a budget deficit."

Inmates were advised in late March of their impending move. They were told to begin a mass cleaning of their housing units and to send home excess property.

Efforts are being made to allow inmates in specialized programs to remain at Tappan until their completion. Such programs include, for example, Hudson Link and the New York Theological Seminary.

While state prisons housed 71,538 inmates in December 1999, that had dropped to 66,475 last month.

The number of state readies backed up in counties awaiting transfer has also declined sharply, from 4,425 in 1999 to 653 last month.

The system's population is expected to drop to approximately 65,100 by the March 31, 2004, end of the current fiscal year.

Excluding Sing Sing, 4,700 usable medium-security beds have been vacated across the state.

"If sentencing rates unexpectedly change, or an event occurs that necessitates that we bring on bed space, the vacated beds at Sing Sing and around the state can quickly be brought back into service," according to Commissioner Goord.

A view of medium-security housing at Sing Sing.

'Citizen soldiers' recount duties in armed services

Staff says 'We have a job to do over there,' balance national duty, personal hardship

While many of their coworkers are preparing to ship out to the war in Iraq if deployed, many Department employees have already been called to military service overseas and are back at their facilities – with vivid memories and the daunting prospects of being called up again.

DOCS|TODAY spoke to some of them to get their opinions on their duties and assignments.

Albion CO Juan Morales is a master sergeant and civil affairs specialist assigned to the 401st Civil Affairs Battalion out of Webster.

He spent 11 months last year in Afghanistan, helping rebuild that war-battered country. He oversaw base operations at a U.S. Air Force base and ventured through the country in a six-member U.S. team with the goal of assessing and meeting the rebuilding needs of individual communities.

"We wore civilian clothes for our missions at the start and grew beards to blend in to the community," CO Morales said. "We had interpreters with us and we traveled the country meeting with local leaders to see what their needs were. Our sole goal was to accommodate the local people.

"My job was to 'win the hearts and minds' of the local people," continued CO Morales. "It's a lot easier to win a war when the local people are behind you."

Without getting into specifics, CO Morales and his entourage lived in "safe houses" and lived off the local economy. On several of their journeys, they were accompanied by soldiers from the Northern Alliance who aided in security.

"Every time you went out the gate, the threat was there," he said. "We watched their backs and they watched ours."

After a short while on the job and forging the needed local contacts and trust of the Afghan people, CO Morales and the others donned their uniforms and shaved their beards.

Albion CO Morales (left) in Afghanistan with a Northern Alliance soldier.

The tasks of the group were varied and, CO Morales said, appreciated by the local residents. They would establish health clinics, restore water supplies and rebuild structures destroyed or damaged by bombs. The work was financed by U.S. tax dollars. Local residents were hired to perform the various rebuilding projects, providing a boost to local economies.

For the most part, CO Morales said his team was quickly embraced by local residents. However, it was another story when the group visited one Afghan province: several innocent people in a wedding party were bombed and killed by the U.S.-led coalition that thought it was responding to ground fire.

"We had to work hard there to build our credibility," he said.

Reflecting on his tour of duty, CO Morales, who was also deployed to Bosnia for a six-month tour in 1999, said: "I've been in the Army 20 years and that was the best training I ever had."

CO Neyland's view of Bosnia from behind the M-60 mounted on a Hummer.

Arthur Kill CO Hector Quinones is a master at arms with the Naval Police, assigned to the Military Sea Lift Persian Gulf 102nd Unit. He spent nine months last year in Athens, Ga., and on the USS Kitty Hawk in the Persian Gulf. He was on standby to return to the region and said he was up to the task.

"I don't have a problem going. I was already there once," CO Quinones said of his expected redeployment. "I signed the contract and my duty is to go where I'm called to go. I owe it to my country and I'm proud of what I'm doing. We're only doing what needs to be done."

During his tour last year, CO Quinones worked in the brig on the Kitty Hawk, guard-

ing those American servicemen who had run afoul of the rules.

"There were only a couple of individuals there, no detainees from Iraq or Afghanistan," he said.

CO Quinones' at-sea assignment precluded him from getting to know the local residents and the Middle East culture. But he said he returned to the states with some fond memories.

"The people, my shipmates, is what I remember," he said. "You meet a lot of interesting people from all across the country and you really develop a bond with them."

As for a possible return to the region, the prospects of Saddam Hussein using chemical or biological agents on U.S. troops did not faze CO Quinones.

"We're highly trained in chemical and biological responses," he said. "We're pretty much equipped to handle anything. I'm not worried about it. We should be all right."

The Afghan landscape surrounding CO Morales is not unlike that where coalition forces are fighting in Iraq.

A married father of two, CO Quinones said his wife – who was working two blocks from the World Trade Center when terrorists destroyed it – "is on edge a little bit.

CO Neyland on armed patrol in Bosnia.

"But she knows we have to do what we have to do," he said. "I will serve and protect. Let's just get this over with so we can all get on with our lives."

The ongoing overseas efforts of Department military personnel in the war against terrorism haven't been solely confined to the Middle East.

Clinton CO Kenneth Neyland, attached to the 158th Security Forces out of Burlington, Vt., last year spent a three-month tour of duty in Bosnia.

"I can't tell you what we were doing. All that I really can say because of security reasons is that we were patrolling Bosnia," said CO Neyland, who was also on standby for deployment to the Middle East.

CO Neyland said he conducted road patrols as well as air patrols using sophisticated Black Hawk helicopters.

"The country is just unbelievable," said CO Neyland, who brought along a camera and took lots of pictures to remember his experience. "The mountain views were incredible."

But there are some visions that CO Neyland would like to forget.

"To see how that country's living a year after a war was pretty sad," said CO Neyland. "It was a real eye-opening experience."

As for the local residents, "we didn't do all that much mingling with them," said CO Neyland. "They don't like us, even though we were over there helping them."

Although CO Neyland said he wasn't apprehensive about returning overseas, he feels for the 12-year-old son he would leave behind.

"He's not looking forward to it at all," said CO Neyland.

"He missed a lot of camping and fishing with me last year and he's not looking forward to missing it again this year.

"But we have a job to do over there."

Guard, reserve members looking forward to service

They also serve who stand and wait: 'this is something that has to be done'

Since 9-11, hundreds of DOCS employees have watched the deployment of their coworkers, awaiting their own call to service that could lead them to the battlefields of Iraq.

From toppling Saddam Hussein's Iraqi regime to helping rebuild a battered Afghanistan, Department employees have unselfishly heeded the call of duty, often serving long tours thousands of miles away from their loving and worried families.

But all who enlisted in the National Guard or Army Reserves knew that deployment was a real possibility. They are unanimous in their pride of both their efforts and those of their coworkers in keeping America free and safe.

"The courage, dedication and solidarity that has been exhibited by our employees on a daily basis in the wake of 9-11, both at home and abroad, are a true testament to the spirit that is the family of corrections," said Commissioner Goord.

"At the same time," continued Commissioner Goord, "those employees who are not deployed overseas or assigned to homeland security are to be commended for standing in for their military coworkers to ensure that our facilities remain safe and secure. It's been a real team effort and we should all be proud of our ongoing work on behalf of the state and the entire country."

Clinton Clerk and Reserves Staff Sgt. Brenda LaMoy.

Many calendars featured a bright green shamrock on March 17 in honor of St. Patrick's Day, known as a time of celebration. But for many DOCS employees on military standby, March 17 will be remembered as anything but merry.

That night, after Iraq rejected diplomatic solutions, President Bush delivered a 13-minute message that was televised around the world: Saddam and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours or face a massive and sustained military strike to remove them. They ignored the warning, and war commenced two days later.

For many DOCS employees who were awaiting the call to serve their country, that message was not unexpected. But it still sent chills down their spines.

"I'm nervous and scared, both. It's weird," said Clinton Calculations Clerk Brenda LaMoy, who at the time was on standby and assigned to the 4219th U.S. Army Hospital out of Malone. "But I'm ready to go. I've put more than 20 years in the reserves and I'm ready. It's something we have to do."

The mother of two grown sons, Ms. LaMoy said they had come to grips with the growing reality of her heading into combat. But she said it was a different story when it came to her two young grandchildren.

"That's the hard part because I'm really close to them," said Ms. LaMoy, a Staff Sergeant and medic. "One of them asked me, 'can you die in the Army?' I said, 'It's a possibility.' But this is something that I have to do and Lord willing, I'll be back. It's in His hands. I'll be doing a lot of praying and I know a lot of people will be praying for me. But this is something that has to be done."

A critical care nurse out of the 865th Combat Support Hospital in Utica, Eastern Nurse Administrator Robin Riordan and 160 coworkers were dispatched to Georgia in November for pre-deployment training for eventual transfer to Kuwait.

"We had to go down there to qualify that we're ready to go to war," Ms. Riordan recalled of the multi-pronged training regime. "It was kind of like a test."

After psyching herself up for combat, Ms. Riordan saw her orders rescinded, as did 19 fellow workers. One hundred forty of her coworkers shipped out to Kuwait the day after Thanksgiving, while the others returned home on standby.

"They pulled us back at the last minute," Ms. Riordan said. "I was torn. I didn't want to go to war but I didn't want my friends over there to do it alone."

On the eve of war, Ms. Riordan said she was again set for deployment.

"I support my president 100 percent in putting an end to terrorism," she said. "Nobody wants to go to war but it has to be done for the good of the country."

Facing a likely one-year tour of duty, Ms. Riordan worried about the impact on her three young children, who were only used to seeing her away from home for a week or two at a time.

"But this is something that has to be done, and be done now," she said.

Family was also on the mind of Marcy Lt. Christopher Loboda, married with four sons. Also on standby, Lt. Loboda is attached to the 102th Military Sea Lift Command Westmed, whose duties include plucking people from sea.

"We've talked about it," said Lt. Loboda. "They're resigned to the fact that if it happens it happens. I've got a feeling that once I'm over there it's going to be tougher on my family than it will be on me."

Lt. Loboda said the uncertainty of activation was difficult.

"I don't know when I'll be going," he said. "Activations from my unit typically have been coming to us on Fridays. So you just wait from one Friday until the next Friday to see if the call comes in."

Lt. Loboda said he had no problems heading into combat "because of the reasons for it. That situation over there directly relates to our country. I'll be proud when I'm serving my country."

Oneida Dentist Wenzell Carter Jr., assigned to the 174th Fighter Wing in Syracuse since 1991, said he wasn't likely to be called overseas. Nonetheless, Dr. Carter is performing a vital role stateside, ensuring that all those military personnel who are headed overseas have no dental problems before they're deployed.

Dr. Carter said a major cause of military personnel being removed from duty during Operation Desert Storm was, surprisingly, dental problems.

"I believe that from a military standpoint we seem to have all of our assets well positioned," Dr. Carter said.

Sgt. Carl Reggentine (standing) and CO Joseph Canella were activated for military service, and may be again.

Dr. Carter said he was proud to be a part of the effort to wipe out terrorism, even if he wouldn't be performing his profession on foreign soil.

"I think anybody would like to feel that they're contributing to the success of any military operation involving our country," Dr. Carter said. "It gives you personal satisfaction and you always want to do your very best."

Oneida Nurse Geri Metzler, who like Ms. Riordan is attached to the Utica-based combat hospital, also admitted to some uneasiness.

"I'd be lying if I said that I wasn't a little nervous," said Ms. Metzler, who has been in the military for 19 years. She'd been on standby since the end of November, anxiously anticipating deployment but not knowing for sure if or when the call would come.

Ms. Metzler said she fully supported President Bush's decision to remove Hussein and wipe out terrorism.

"It's time to do something. There's been enough procrastinating," she said.

"Even though I'm nervous this is something that I've devoted half my life to," said Ms. Metzler. "I made a pledge to serve my country and I plan on living up to that pledge."

Ms. Metzler said she felt for her coworkers who would be leaving family and, in many cases, little children behind when they're deployed.

"I don't have that problem, and in a way that's good," Ms. Metzler said. "I've only got two cats."

Albion Sgt. Carl Reggentine, attached to the 1st Battalion 108th Infantry Bravo Company, was also eager to spring into action. Although he also wouldn't be headed to action overseas, he and others will play a vital role by working in conjunction with officers from the New York City Police Department and the New York City Transit Authority ensuring the safety of midtown residents. Bravo Company has long been instrumental in helping to ensure the security of high-profile homeland interests.

"We've done other state missions like guarding power plants, airports and other high-security sites," said Sgt. Reggentine. "I feel it's a very important mission, providing security for the transportation system in New York City. There's always a chance something could happen. I'm happy to provide whatever support I can to the entire state and the whole country."

Sgt. Reggentine conceded he could be deployed overseas but said he doubted it.

"We're performing a vital function right here at home," he said. "I just hope everybody who's sent overseas is able to return home safely."

Like his counterparts throughout the Department, Sgt. Reggentine said he supported President Bush's decision on Iraq.

"Definitely," he said. "I support the commander in chief."

Also on standby was Arthur Kill Counselor Maryann Brown, an information management specialist with the 137th Airlift Wing out of Newburgh. She was anxiously awaiting her tour of duty but admitted to some reservations.

"I feel obligated to serve my country and will serve it very proudly," she said. "Defending our country, yes, it's the right thing to do. But I still think that things can be done without going through this. I just hope they hold off."

Ms. Brown, who said she's a frequent traveler to the Middle East, said she feared an attack on Iraq would spur additional attacks on Americans from other third world countries.

"The U.S. is greatly hated over there and these third world countries are wiser and stronger. And not as poor as they claim to be," said Ms. Brown. "They're jealous about us and our way of life. We care about other countries. Third world countries are all about individuality.

"I have mixed emotions," Ms. Brown said. "Whether we have war or not, their mission is to bring us to our knees."

Taking on a life of its own

Taconic

Nestled in the affluent Westchester County community of Bedford Hills, Taconic has been assigned several varied but intertwined missions over the past century. Its roots date back to 1901 when it opened as the New York State Reformatory for Women between the ages of 15 and 30. In 1913, the Bureau of Social Hygiene established a laboratory next door, which evaluated reformatory residents for the investigation and treatment of what was then termed "feeblemindedness." The then-Department of Correction took over the reformatory in 1926 and, in 1933, merged it with the newly-opened Bedford Hills Correctional Facility for women.

For the next four decades, the reformatory operated as part of Bedford Hills, still the state's only maximum-security prison for females. In 1973, Taconic began operations as an autonomous medium-security prison.

But let's begin at the Beguine: it was in 1913 that the laboratory dealing with the issue of "feeblemindedness" was opened.

Its founders, including John D. Rockefeller Jr., proposed to have each person committed to the reformatory studied by experts from the physical, mental, social and moral disciplines. The view was that they would be able to recommend a treatment regime most likely to bring about reformation of the individual or, if that was not probable, to recommend permanent custodial

care. The bureau added a psychopathic hospital to its laboratory in 1916.

The Bedford Hills site of 71 acres and attendant buildings cost about $200,000. The physical plant, along with its staff of scientific experts and the best equipment available, was put at the disposal of the reformatory at a rental rate of $1 a year. The state permitted women committed to the reformatory to be quarantined and examined there.

In 1920, the state authorized the lease or rental of the laboratory and established a division for mentally defective delinquent women at the reformatory. The state purchased the buildings that were known as the "Rockefeller Group" three years later.

Through the reorganization of government in 1926, the reformatory at Bedford Hills became part of the then-Department of Correction. The duties of the Commission on Prisons were turned over to the new Commission of Corrections.

That same year the Legislature decided to co-locate a prison for women at the Bedford Hills site. It appropriated $225,000 for remodeling and reconditioning all the buildings. Some of those funds were also used to construct a general dining hall, kitchen, auditorium and school.

CO Gladys Reyes works in the lobby area.

The women's prison was to be a distinctively separate unit: the prison inmates had no contact with the reformatory inmates, the latter of whom were eventually transferred to other facilities around the state.

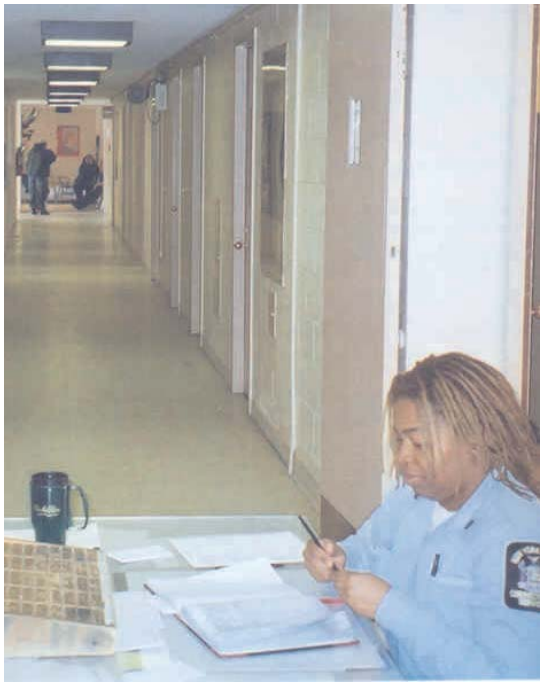
The Commissioner of Correction was empowered to transfer the female prisoners from Auburn prison as soon as the new Bedford Hills institution was ready to receive them.

In 1932, the New York State Reformatory for Women became the Westfield State Farm. The complex would include the new women's prison under construction at the time.

The first group of 50 prisoners slated to occupy the new prison left Auburn on June 26, 1933, aboard a special train.

At the Bedford Hills train station, the women were met by the superintendent, state police, guards and matrons, and were taken to their new home.

During 1971-72, Bedford Hills was a single correctional facility with separate male and female units. In 1973 the male inmates were transferred and their unit closed in June. In December, that unit reopened as Taconic.



CO Talema Sims on duty in a housing unit.

A small cadre of inmates was used to renovate the existing buildings with painting, plumbing and electrical work among their duties. The concept at the time was to create a college for the inmate population. But that idea was abandoned in April 1974 and today Taconic continues its mission as a medium-security facility.

Meeting the varied needs of a diverse population

Taconic offers a full range of academic education, some vocational training, counseling services and volunteer services programming. They include Adult Basic Education (ABE), Pre-GED and English as a Second Language.

While it offers much of what's also offered at other prisons throughout the state, Taconic is unique. One of its main missions involves a select group of inmates that shares the same problem: alcohol and/or substance abuse.

Taconic has received national acclaim for its Comprehensive Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment (CASAT) program. Of the 464 beds at the facility, 215 are dedicated for CASAT and relapse recovery. That tends to reflect the reality that 71 percent of the population at Taconic has been diagnosed with alcohol or substance abuse problems.

For an inmate to be considered for the Department's CASAT program, which is also offered at six other facilities for male inmates, they must have a history of alcohol and substance abuse problems; be between 10 and 24 months to their earliest possible release date; receive presumptive work release approval from Central Office, and be of medium- or minimum-security classification.

Inmates convicted of committing violent acts are excluded from participating in the program.

CASAT is an intensive and multi-pronged treatment program. In Phase I, inmates are educated in the Taconic annex about their disease. They spend up to six months in community reintegration as part of Phase II, continuing to work on their recovery. They spend whatever remaining time they have on their sentences on day reporting status, continuing to get treatment in the community while restoring family ties and looking for a job and a place to live.

The goals of CASAT include:

- To better prepare chemically addicted inmates for return to their families and communities upon release from prison.
- To focus on the total needs of inmates with histories of alcohol and substance abuse.

Please turn to next page

Teacher Mary Donigan (far left) during an Adult Basic Education class.

Continued from the previous page

- To ensure appropriate aftercare services in the community.
- To increase coordination with other state agencies, local agencies, independent service providers and community organizations, and
- To reduce relapse and recidivism rates.

Another important service available to Taconic inmates is the Counseling, AIDS, Resource and Education (CARE) program. CARE is an HIV/AIDS peer counseling group that provides a forum for group and individual counseling, HIV antibody testing, support groups, transitional services, outreach work and discharge planning.

CARE provides benefits to others besides those enrolled in the program. Every third week in July CARE holds its annual AIDS Awareness Day. Agencies from throughout the community that deal with HIV/AIDS issues are invited into the facility to meet with all interested inmates, share advice and hand out literature.

Every November, CARE also holds a Dance-a-Thon. Inmates enrolled in the program obtain pledges from other inmates and staff tied to the amount of time they're able to dance. The money is then donated by the inmate recipients to a group that sponsors a summer camp for children whose parents are HIV-positive. The inmates raised $1,500 for that cause last year.

Taconic also offers its inmates the opportunity to participate in a comprehensive work-study program called Project Does to qualify for employment in the food services industry. The program emphasizes nutrition, personal hygiene, health and safety procedures, accident prevention, housekeeping and sanitation, menu planning, cost analysis and control, food preparation, storage and service.

It is a challenging and intensive 16-week program in which Taconic's food administrator works closely with each inmate. Those who successfully complete the course receive written certification which could assist them in getting a job in the food service industry upon their release; many former inmates who completed the program have done just that. The certificate also qualifies the inmate for various food service positions within DOCS.

Taconic also offers its inmates a general business program to provide them with the basic skills needed to get an office job upon their release from prison. The course instructs inmates on a variety of office automation equipment including electronic typewriters, computer terminal keyboards (inmates do not have any access to the Internet), calculators, telephones, transcribers and printers. In addition, instruction in shorthand, filing and mailing procedures prepare inmates for different office and general clerical positions.

The length of the course varies, depending on the student's progress. The course provides the training needed to obtain a variety of entry level business office positions such as mail or file clerk, dictation machine transcriber, stenographer, typist, secretary, calculating machine operator, data entry clerk, billing machine operator, desktop publisher and accounting clerk.

Taconic inmates also have access to pre- and post-release services in Spanish.

Helping maintain strong family bonds

One of Taconic's other claims to fame is that it's one of two prisons in the state that offers an on-site nursery program for selected inmate mothers and their infant children, a valuable bonding program that's believed to have helped reduce recidivism.

Taconic's nursery program started in 1990 and is an outgrowth of a similar program at Bedford Hills. There is space at Taconic for 16 inmates and their babies on the second floor of a housing unit for inmates enrolled in the facility's CASAT program. Taconic's nursery program is specifically designed for mothers who've been diagnosed with alcohol and substance abuse problems; its population count varies.

Outside volunteer visits an inmate with child living in the prison nursery.

Across the street at Bedford Hills, there is nursery space available for 32 inmates and their babies on the second and third floors of the building which houses the facility's infirmary. The population of the Bedford Hills nursery at any given time also varies.

Correction Law Section 611 permits the inmates to keep their babies at either facility for 12 months, with a possible extension of up to 18 months if there is a reasonable assurance the inmate will be released from prison within that time. Inmates who will be incarcerated for more than 18 months from the time their baby is born must relinquish the child to his or her father, family members or another party when the baby turns a year old.

New inmate transfers to DOCS who had their infants housed with them in city or county jails with nurseries can also apply to bring their infants to Bedford Hills provided they are less than a year old. Those transfers are subject to a case-by-case review.

At each nursery, the inmates and their babies stay together in single rooms, double-occupancy rooms or dormitories with other inmates and their babies. At Taconic, inmates typically remain with their infants on a full-time basis for up to two weeks; at Bedford Hills, the time limit is up to six weeks.

After the respective full-time-custody time parameters have been reached, the inmate mothers are required to participate in regular programming during the day, at which time the babies are cared for at on-site child care centers. The Taconic child care center is coordinated by staff from Hour Children, an outside agency, and inmates; the Bedford Hills child care center is operated by Catholic Charities under a contract with DOCS. The inmate mothers and their babies at both facilities are then reunited after programming.

CO Debra Linen checks an inmate's paperwork.

Not all inmates with infant children can participate in the nursery program. Participation can be denied if the inmate has:

- A lengthy sentence.
- Serious emotional, psychiatric or other problems.
- A poor past performance of parenting.
- A long criminal history.
- A poor disciplinary record.
- A history of violence.

Serious concerns about the health of the baby also could bar participation because the nursery program is established as a "well-care" program. Although there is medical staff on site to handle the health care needs of the babies, there are no on-site facilities for infants with serious health problems who need sophisticated, long-term medical care.

There are several advantages associated with the program. Studies have shown that inmates with strong family ties return to prison at a lower rate than inmates without those ties. Inmates enrolled in the nursery program also have a lower incidence of disciplinary problems than inmates in general population, meaning enhanced security. In addition, many of the inmate mothers are products of broken homes and know little about basic parenting skills. Through the help and support of others trained in that field, they're able to learn those basic parenting skills.

The program also benefits the infant. The baby can be with their mother during a crucial period of development and can forge an important bond. And through their daily interaction with other children and their mothers in a communal setting, the infants tend to exhibit a very positive social development.

A Correction Officer and nursery manager help staff the nurseries. There are also pediatric nurses assigned to the nurseries. The Department also has a contract with the Westchester County Medical Center to provide regular pediatric clinics at each nursery and some prenatal care. Pediatricians from the center do routine checkups and immunizations and assess overall development and special problems. The pediatricians are on call 24 hours a day.

A mutually beneficial relationship

Volunteers are an integral part of the daily operations at Taconic. There are 275 registered volunteers from the local community who come to the facility on a regular basis to meet and speak with the inmates. The volunteers come from a variety of disciplines but have a unified goal: providing the inmates with the tools, attitudes and skills they need to ensure they can become law-abiding members of society upon release.

The Hour Children program, headquartered in Long Island City, has long been cited for its multiple successes. The parenting program covers a variety of topics, from domestic violence to maintaining family ties, from providing employment skills to advising inmates how to navigate the family court system.

Other community volunteers provide inmates with advice on how to avoid alcohol and substance abuse problems, teach music, conduct religious services for all denominations and offer guidance and spiritual advice. Staff has long been appreciative of their efforts as they provide additional tools to help inmates succeed in the community and not return to prison.

In turn, Taconic employees are a vital force in the local communities surrounding the prison. As with employees at other facilities throughout the state, they work as volunteer firefighters and sports coaches, serve on school, town and other local community boards and donate their time for the needy in the community.

Every year, staff at Taconic and other facilities participate in Make a Difference Day (MADD) activities to assist the needy in communities throughout New York state. In 2002, Taconic purchased and donated new toys, gifts, clothing, blankets and other items to the Richmond Children's Foundation, a group whose clients include children and adults with disabilities.

Merle Cooper program prepares inmates for success

Therapeutic community approach works, providing inmates with needed life skills

The Merle Cooper Program at Clinton annex has entered its second quarter-century of providing inmates with the tools they need to succeed in prison as well as upon their release.

Established in 1977, the multifaceted therapeutic community program provides counseling and other services for inmates experiencing problems adjusting to their incarceration. The voluntary program lasts from 18 to 24 months, depending on an inmate's needs and pattern of progress.

There are 228 inmates enrolled in the program, including 14 specially-trained inmate peer counselors who assist staff in providing individual and group support. The inmate participants are separated from the general population and live together as a community during the program.

"It's been a very successful program as illustrated by the fact that it's been up and running for 25 years now," said Clinton Deputy Superintendent for Programs Ralph Santor, a former director of the program. "We take referrals from throughout the Department. The only thing we require is that inmates want to come here."

There's also the other end of the spectrum.

"Some of them don't want to leave here when they're done with the program," said Mr. Santor. "They really enjoy the program and the environment."

The task force that developed the program included its namesake, Merle Cooper, who was then a retired longtime business officer for Dannemora State Hospital. He died just before his vision of the program was to be presented to then-Commissioner Benjamin Ward. Commissioner Ward signed off on the program, and it was named after the man so responsible for its creation.

After a comprehensive two-week training program for the original Merle Cooper staff, inmates began arriving in July 1977. Over the next few months, 154 arrived for the program and were housed in three buildings in the Annex.

Many of the inmates arriving in the early years of the program were classified as Office of Mental Health (OMH) Level 1. That meant they had histories of suicidal gestures and lengthy disciplinary records.

They were in need of intensive counseling and constant attention, and provided a daily challenge to the six psychologists and one Correction Counselor assigned to the program. Fortunately, many of the Merle Cooper staff members at that time were veterans of Dannemora State Hospital and the Diagnostic and Treatment Center (DTC) clinical treatment concept that is a key component of the program. They brought with them a wealth of experience when it came to working with inmates with a variety of emotional and behavioral problems.

With the advent of the Intermediate Care Program (ICP) and Special Needs Units (SNU) in the mid-1980's, Merle Cooper began a transition from a heavy OMH caseload to one with a large influx of sex offenders. For the next nine years, the program would have a large percentage of sex offenders who had no other programs available to them at that time. At the same time, the program began accepting some inmates reflective of the general population: those with antisocial personalities characterized by multiple incarcerations and histories of violent behavior.

As sex offender programs emerged in the mid-1990's, the percentage of sex offenders in the program fell to less than 20 percent, where it stands today. At the same time, treating inmates demonstrating antisocial tendencies became and remains the main focus of the program.

To start the process, interested inmates need to contact their counselors and volunteer for the program; a review is then conducted to ascertain suitability. Upon arrival at the program, another assessment is conducted. The inmate is then assigned to

Continued on facing page

Participants enrolled in Clinton's Merle Cooper program hold group meetings to discuss how best to improve their lives in preparation for their eventual release from prison.

Camp Gabriels staff supervised inmates who helped construct this castle in 1996.

Lakeview, Gabriels help build community ice castles

Recent winter carnivals in northern and western New York were made a little brighter this year thanks to the assistance of staff and supervised community service crew inmates from Camp Gabriels and Lakeview. *(More photos on The Back Page.)*

After a one-year hiatus caused by last year's unusually warm weather, Camp Gabriels staff and inmates returned to Saranac Lake to team with members of the local community. Together, they built the massive illuminated ice castle that's been the highlight of the community's annual winter carnival for 106 years. Gabriels has assisted in the construction of 27 castles.

Sgt. James Keith said the construction chores this year were greatly aided by the cold North Country weather.

"There have been times when we'd have to rebuild the castle two or three times because the weather warmed up and the castle melted," said Sgt. Keith. "That wasn't the case this year."

Sgt. Keith said the community was "very appreciative and thankful" for the help of inmates and staff, who once again were honored at a community dinner following the conclusion of the winter carnival.

In the western part of the state, supervised community service crews from Lakeview assisted community members with the construction of the illuminated ice castle that was to serve as the focal point for the winter carnival in Mayville. That castle was nearly 25 feet high and featured three medieval towers connected by walls with a 30-foot courtyard in front. Each side tower was 18 feet in width and 18 feet high; the central tower measured 24 feet in width and 20 feet tall.

A dozen Lakeview inmates, under the supervision of one Correction Officer, worked on the project. The weather was very cold and the inmates worked long hours, 720 to be exact, before the task was completed. But no one seemed to mind. 🕮

Merle Cooper program ...

Continued from facing page

group counseling, community meetings, recreation and work together in the Furniture Refinishing Shop. If the inmate has not reached at least the ninth-grade level in both reading and math skills, he must also take academic courses until he achieves those benchmarks.

Group counseling remains the linchpin of the program. Inmates are expected to discuss everything about themselves in group: where they grew up, family dynamics, education, substance abuse, domestic violence plus their arrest and conviction record. The program places great emphasis on discussing the poor decisions/mistakes the inmate has made that has led to incarcerations. Inmates also must acknowledge the relationships with family who have had to endure their criminal behavior and the continuing damage they've done to their community.

The goal is to get at the root of criminal behavior and provide the inmate with the tools and the group support needed to survive in prison and, eventually, on the streets.

Outside of group, the inmates are instructed to spend their non-programmed hours meeting and talking with their peers and staff. Inmates are expected to discuss the same areas covered in group as a way to expand their knowledge of different people. The program places a great emphasis on the inmate "educating" himself about life and people, improving what is usually the antisocial personality's "flawed understanding" of himself and others.

To assist the inmates, the program offers numerous educational counseling courses including Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment, Life Skills, Aggression Replacement Training, Domestic Violence and Sex Offender Counseling.

While enrolled in the program, the inmate is expected to develop a close working relationship with staff, especially the Officers. The Officers make the program work. They are a veteran group which averages more than 20-plus years on the job. They are involved in all aspects of the program including group counseling, community meetings and program committees. Their input and insight is vital to the functioning of the program and it is just as vital that the inmate establishes a connection with the Officers that allows the inmates to learn from them. 🕮

Transitions

March 2003

Names	Title	Location
Promotions		
Mathew C. Oommen	Calculations Clerk 2	Bedford Hills
Paul H. Cervoni	Plumber & Steamfitter	Bedford Hills
Michele Phalen	Purchasing Agent	Main Office
Nancy Abraham	Purchasing Agent	Main Office
Manuel Amado, Jr.	Facility Ops Specialist	Main Office
Joseph Wood	Head Cook	Mid-Orange
Deaton Pilgrim	Head Cook	Taconic
Wanda Stachowski	Inmate Records Coord 2	Wende
Dale M. Knab	Head Farmer	Wyoming
Gregg G. Prentice	Correction Lieutenant	Bayview
Mark O'Connell	Correction Lieutenant	Edgecombe
Michael Reed	Correction Lieutenant	Edgecombe
James H. Anctil	Correction Lieutenant	Queensboro
Stephen Landers	Correction Lieutenant	Queensboro
Anthony Rodriguez	Correction Sergeant	Bedford Hills
Jonathan Michael	Correction Sergeant	Fishkill
Harold Hanrahan	Correction Sergeant	Sing Sing
Frank Havranek	Correction Sergeant	Sing Sing
Retirements		
Paul A. Ruschak	Assist Industrial Supt	Auburn
Bridget Iocolano	Keyboard Specialist 1	Auburn
Michael A. Nabozny	Industries Engineer	Auburn
Donald J. Dellostritto	Ed Super	Auburn
William A. Gabak	Indus Training Supvr.	Auburn
Joseph F. Connery, Jr.	Plant Utilities Engineer 3	Auburn
Edward J. Kalet	Indus Training Supr	Auburn
Shirley A. Ryan	Keyboard Specialist 1	Auburn
Mary A. Ginnerty	Correction Counselor	Auburn
Joseph F. Graceffo	Stores Clerk 1	Auburn
Elizabeth Sarfaty	Counselor ASAT	Bare Hill
Phyllis McKenzie	Nurse 2	Bare Hill
Charles T. Goeke	Rec Program Leader	Bare Hill
Julio Domingo	Correction Counselor	Bayview
Robert J. Stewart	Maintenance Supervisor	Bayview
Diego Bueti	Head Cook	Bedford Hills
Paul F. Koch	Dep Supt Admin 2	Butler
Margaret J. Paul	Keyboard Specialist	Cape Vincent
Joseph Avola	Vocational Instructor	Cape Vincent
Judith Tyndall	Secretary 2	Cape Vincent
William J. Donofrio	Ed Super (General)	Cayuga
Arthur H. Maggy	Stores Clerk 2	Chateaugay
David A. Collins	General Mechanic	Clinton
Harold A. Recore	Sr Correction Counselor	Clinton
Fred H. Lagoy	Indus Training Super	Clinton
Dianne M. Stone	Keyboard Specialist	Coxsackie
Mary A. Poluzzi	Correction Counselor Aide	Downstate
William F. Rogers	Principal Stores Clerk	Downstate
John J. Devine	Elec Equipment Mechanic	Downstate
Frances Bowder	Calculations Clerk 2	Downstate
Rodolphe Kanzinger	Plant Superintendent B	Eastern
Rhonda A. Robinson	Secretary	Elmira
Susan C. Ichikawa	Secretary	Elmira
Carolyn T. English	Keyboard Specialist	Elmira
Thomas W. Rupp	Correction Counselor	Elmira
Marie O'Boyle	Production Control Super	Fishkill
John Cooper	Vocational Instructor	Fishkill
Johnella Hill	Sr Correction Counselor	Fulton
Odila Mojica	Clerk	Fulton
Marlene A. Castiglia	Teacher 4	Gowanda
Joan E. Conrad	Dental Hygienist	Gowanda
Patricia A. Parks	Head Account Clerk	Gowanda
Frances H. Downes	Calculations Clerk	Greene
Valentine H. Kriele	Ed Super (General)	Hudson
John M. Stengel	Senior Librarian	Lakeview
Leslie Hessel	Ed Super (General)	Livingston
Laurence J. Dewind	Correction Counselor ASAT	Livingston
Susan M. Gilmet	Principal Account Clerk	Lyon Mountain
Patricia A. Sweeney	Internal Auditor	Main Office
Derinda L. Vanderwerken	Purchasing Assistant	Main Office
Barrie Daniels	Clerk	Main Office
Kevin Hiemel	Industries Sales Rep	Man Office
Carol T. Caban	Senior Budgeting Analyst	Main Office
James A. Gregory	Sec Staff Project Evaluator	Main Office
Mary L. Silvano	Secretary	Main Office
Stephen M. Bernardi	Deputy Commissioner	Main Office
Robert L. Fisher	Prog Research Specialist	Main Office
Petrita Hernandez-Rojas	Supvr Bilingual Educ. Prog.	Main Office
Rosemary McSweeney	Administrative Aide	Main Office
James Mindel	Internal Auditor	Main Office
Arthur Morgenstern	Ministerial Program Coord	Main Office
Marie Patterson	Assoc Personnel Admin	Main Office
Katherine Peaslee	Secretary	Main Office
Theodore Pettigrass	Assist Dir Personnel	Main Office
Carol A. Purzycki	Principal Account Clerk	Main Office
Charles Seaton	Tractor Trailer Operator	Main Office
Janice Taylor	Assoc Personnel Admin	Main Office
Richard Weaver	Industries Sales Rep.	Main Office

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

Wayne J. Wilhelm	Assistant Commissioner	Main Office
Antoinette Azzarito	Calculations Clerk	Mid-State
Donna Mariani	Nursing Assistant	Mohawk
David L. Kraus	Sr Counselor	Mohawk
Edward Wadas	Teacher	Mohawk
Howard R. Light	Food Admr.	McGregor
Dolores Wilson	Secretary	NYC Admin.
Edward V. Martin	Teacher	Ogdensburg
Harold M. Downing	Teacher	Ogdensburg
Carl F. Vandresar	General Mechanic	Oneida
Thomas J. Pitera	Head Cook	Oneida
R. R. Keener	Teacher	Otisville
Arthur Jackson	Head Cook	Otisville
Victor Pollock	Pharmacist	Sing Sing
Joseph M. Porubek	Ed Super (Vocational)	Sullivan
Judith E. Gerow	Secretary	Sullivan
I. D. Lee, Jr.	Sr Counselor ASAT	Taconic
Robert Drown	Stores Clerk	Ulster
Sandra Mainville	Payroll Clerk	Upstate
Gerd Kienert	Dep Supt Prog	Upstate
W. F. McDowell	Dep Supt Security	Washington
David Davenport	Plant Utilities Engineer	Watertown
Walter B. Welch	Maintenance Supervisor	Willard
William H. Trim	General Mechanic	Willard
Patsy A. Hayward	Cook	Willard
Dorothy M. Walters	Calculations Clerk 2	Willard
Annette L. Reagan	Keyboard Specialist 1	Willard
Alice A. Healy	Correction Counselor	Wyoming
Peggy A. Lebaron	Calculations Clerk 1	Wyoming
Frank R. Pellegrino	Correction Lieutenant	Albion
Edward F. Sweeney, Jr.	Correction Lieutenant	Coxsackie
Stephen Vladyka	Correction Lieutenant	Great Meadow
Grant D. Brooks	Correction Lieutenant	Lakeview
Thomas Shea	Correction Lieutenant	Marcy
Thomas Carpenter	Correction Lieutenant	Mt. McGregor
Robert I. Patterson	Correction Lieutenant	Summit
Carl Sorensen	Correction Sergeant	Adirondack
Steven M. Mannfolk	Correction Sergeant	Bedford Hills
Obdulio Brignoni	Correction Sergeant	Green Haven
Michael Salamone, Jr.	Correction Sergeant	Groveland
Charles Welch	Correction Sergeant	Mt. McGregor
John Chadwick	Correction Sergeant	Mt. McGregor
Robert E. Recor	Correction Officer	Altona
Todd J. Strack	Correction Officer	Altona
Richard A. Merritt	Correction Officer	Altona
William S. Kuszaj	Correction Officer	Auburn
Charles A. Bower	Correction Officer	Bare Hill
David H. Elson	Correction Officer	Clinton
Larry C. Blair	Correction Officer	Clinton
Burton A. Owen, Jr.	Correction Officer	Clinton
Frank J. Rybaczyk	Correction Officer	Clinton
John West	Correction Officer	Clinton
Robert Lawless	Correction Officer	Downstate
Richard I. Dorsey	Correction Officer	Downstate
James C. Yeaple	Correction Officer	Downstate
Ronald V. Preston	Correction Officer	Fulton
Thomas VanVlack	Correction Officer	Green Haven
Robert A. Gilroy	Correction Officer	Mid-Orange
Robert Mitchell	Correction Officer	Mt. McGregor
Rafael Santiago	Correction Officer	Otisville
Maurice Tracey	Correction Officer	Washington
Philip Columbus	Correction Officer	Wende
Robert R. Andrews	Correction Officer	Wyoming

Deaths

Penny B. Williams	Calculations Clerk 1	Bare Hill
Barbara Walsh	Correction Counselor	Gowanda
Robert J. Polcovich	Correction Officer	Auburn
James L. Fedele	Correction Officer	Willard

DOCS|TODAY makes changes

As part of our budget economies, we are downsizing DOCS|TODAY while expanding its availability:

- **We have reduced it from 24 pages a month down to 16 pages. That will reduce costs by one-third. To ensure the space needed to carry articles of interest each month to all readers, we were required to eliminate some features and combine others. We hope our changes maintain the core of articles of interest to you.**
- **We have reduced by 9,100 the number of copies sent to correctional facilities as well as Central Office sites in Albany and New York City.**
- **Beginning this month, DOCS|TODAY is available to the general public on the Department's website (www.docs.state.ny.us). The full electronic version is posted on the Internet at mid-month, when the edition is sent to the *Corcraft* shop at Elmira for printing and distribution a few weeks later.**
- **Internet availability also allows us to eliminate the 3,800 copies that were sent to readers outside of DOCS facilities and work sites. That saves on postage, too.**

In this way, DOCS|TODAY contributes to the obligation we all share to reduce state spending where ever possible.

Inmates, staff build ice castles for community rites

Photos show various stages of the process by which inmates at Camp Gabriels and Lakeview harvested slabs of lake ice to build ice castles this winter for local community festivals. See a completed castle, story on page 13.