

DOCS TODAY

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New York State Department of Correctional Services

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DOCS cuts distance to outside health care



DOCS is maintaining safety and security while reducing the distance to outside inmate health care, by consolidating outside trips and finding more ways to bring specialists to inmates. Those initiatives included 4,600 telemedicine consultations last year with outside experts, like the one shown above at Coxsackie, reducing the cost and time to transport thousands of inmate-patients to outside providers.

Starting new series highlighting employees

Our look at Albany Training Academy begins series explaining what we do

This month's look at the operations of our Training Academy begins a new monthly feature explaining to readers what the various components of this agency contribute to our overall mission.

This series succeeds a seven-year project that brought to our readers the histories of each of our correctional facilities, including prisons that no longer exist.

In contemplating this new series, it was obvious that our first offering should be the Training Academy. Two-thirds of our work force are security personnel, most of whom went through its programs.

Many of our new civilian employees undergo orientation there, just as the Academy hosts many other training programs for employees of all disciplines.

These articles include some insightful comments by our employees:

One Academy instructor says he explains the CO's role to recruits this way: "It's all about being fair, firm and consistent. You do that and you stay a 'Correction Officer.' If you don't, you fast become a 'prison guard.'"

Long-time veterans know there was little training when they were first hired. One of them offers this advice from experience: "What they should teach them is don't ever become complacent in these places."

After a few weeks of on-the-job training, a new recruit made this assessment: "Everything

that they told me at the Academy might come up, has come up, or the officers here tell me will come up."

I am proud that like all of our prisons, our Training Academy is also accredited by the American Correctional Association.

That affirms that our program is teaching the best of nationally-accepted standards for our officers and the civilian personnel who attend classes there as well.

An eclectic range of other stories

This month's edition also includes a variety of different stories.

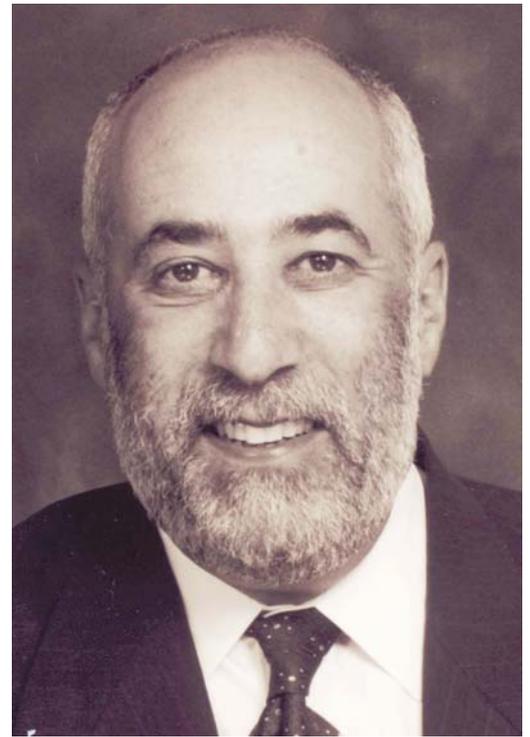
All of our employees, uniformed and civilian alike, can also take pride in the *Spotlight* article at right.

Once again, you have shown us to be good neighbors across the state, as well as in the communities kind enough to have invited our facilities into their midst.

Not only did our employees contribute 10 percent of all monies collected by SEFA, but several of our employees were singled out for their outstanding contributions to the annual fund raising event.

Corcraft is also featured this month with an article on its highly successful asbestos abatement teams. Inmates are taught proper policies and procedures for asbestos abatement and then work on projects in our prisons, for other state agencies and for some community groups across the state. This is a very important project that has the additional benefit of teaching inmates a sought-after skill that they can use once they are released.

Albion continues one of the more unusual inmate programs that is also highlighted this month. Its called aquaponics – growing fish and water-based vegetables. 📖



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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Employees come through again for neighbors in SEFA campaign

Contributions total 10% of all donations, Bayview, Gabriels earn special mention

DOCS employees were once again among the leaders in their support of the 2003 State Employees Federated Appeal (SEFA). Their pledges and contributions of \$930,230 represented 10 percent of the total \$9,235,000 raised in the statewide campaign.

Several DOCS employees were also honored for individual efforts and achievement in their local SEFA campaigns.

Bayview campaign manager Elaine Meyers, a psychologist, was assisted by CO Gwendolyn McCoy-Davis. They were among a select group of only four state employees honored with the Governor's Award for dedicated work on behalf of SEFA. Campaign contributions at Bayview have grown from \$5,500 in 1996 to \$18,600 last year, when a remarkable 96 percent of employees participated.

The team at Camp Gabriels received one of only six Chairmen's awards given statewide. Led by chairwoman Ara Newman, and assisted by fellow Calculations Clerk Gia Demarais and CO Brad Parker, the team set a goal of one-on-one solicitation of the entire staff. They managed to increase participation by 4 percent and contributions by 34 percent.

SEFA officials made note of some of the techniques Ms. Meyers uses, such as giving out homemade brownies at the kickoff event and keeping track of staff to make sure everyone was asked to join the campaign. To reach all shifts she arrived early and stayed late. After the campaign was completed, she sends personal thank-you notes to all donors.

Ms. Newman and her Camp Gabriels team were among only a few accounts in the SEFA campaign to increase contributions from the previous year.

In his award citation to Ms. Meyers at Bayview, Gov. Pataki said, "Your meaningful contributions to this important cause help to serve the needs of our communities and make a positive difference in people's lives. On behalf of all New Yorkers, I commend your generous and caring spirit, which reminds us what can be accomplished when we give of ourselves for the benefit of others."

SEFA awards were started in 1999 to recognize the individual effort responsible for making local campaigns a success.

As had been anticipated, SEFA contributions in 2003 both statewide and within DOCS were down from the previous year, when DOCS employees donated more than \$1 million toward the statewide campaign that raised \$9.47 million. Officials attribute the drop in giving to several factors, including the general economic decline and the retirement of many senior state workers, who tend to be the largest contributors.



Bayview's CO Gwendolyn McCoy-Davis and Psychologist Elaine Meyers (above) were honored for their SEFA efforts, as were (from left, below) Gabriels' Calculations Clerk Gia Demarais, CO Brad Parker and Calculations Clerk Ara Newman.



New York's state employees are the most generous in the country, said United Way of New York vice president Carolyn Dongara, who works with the SEFA campaign. She congratulated DOCS and its employees for their long-term commitment to SEFA.

Last year's campaign theme was "Make Your Mark – and Make a Lasting Impression on the Community." That captured the spirit of the campaign.

As a federated campaign SEFA supports charities that participate in the United Way as well as an extensive range of health, human services, cultural, environmental, legal and advocacy organizations, among many others. Donations serve agencies that serve causes from local to global, and help the very young to the very old. Contributors can give their support to umbrella organizations assisting a number of organizations or directly to specific agencies.

"I congratulate our DOCS award winners. The honors they have received show clearly that their dedication and efforts have been noticed, appreciated and obviously successful," said Commissioner Goord. "We should all be proud of our colleagues who have been honored.

"At the same time, we can and should be proud of all DOCS employees who contributed to a successful campaign. Last year was a difficult year for SEFA, and once again our people rose to the challenge," he added.

Because of the Department's presence throughout much of the state, DOCS employees are important contributors to many local SEFA campaigns, Commissioner Goord noted.

He said, "The generosity of our employees, in giving both their time and money to SEFA, makes it possible for many organizations to provide vital human services in the communities where we work and raise our families.

"The SEFA campaign is yet another way for DOCS to serve our communities. Thanks to our employees, we do it well." 

DOCS initiatives improve inmate health care, reduce taxpayer bill

Telemedicine, trip consolidation cut costs while ensuring quality health services

A new program to streamline and reduce the cost of transporting inmates for quality medical care is showing promising results, forecasting lower costs for taxpayers in the future.

The program is already cutting security overtime expenses and reducing transport costs by consolidating the number of trips required to provide inmates with the services of outside health care providers. Those savings will grow as those newly-implemented cost-saving initiatives are annualized.

DOCS spent more than \$18 million on security personnel costs to transport inmates to medical appointments in 2002-03.

That expenditure prompted a directive from Commissioner Goord to security and health staff to work together in hopes of identifying more efficient and cost-effective ways to accomplish the task.

Commissioner Goord noted that fewer trips also means less liability exposure: "The reduction of trips enhances security, as there are fewer opportunities for accidents, escapes and other events that could occur when a trip leaves a facility."

Implementation of the trip consolidation program began at different times in different hubs over the second half of 2003, starting with Clinton in early July and finishing with Elmira in early December. With that limited experience to date, Commissioner Goord said the results across the state are uneven and it is too soon to draw comparisons with previous full years.

"But the numbers are headed in the right direction," he said, explaining the process is meeting his goal to ensure the delivery of medical services – but at a more efficient cost while maintaining security.

DOCS|TODAY looked at costs associated with medical trips from July 1, 2003, just before consolidation began to be phased in, through April 30, 2004, the most recent month for which data are available.

During that period, regional hubs consolidated the transport of 13,247 inmates into 2,420 medical trips, an average of 5.5 inmates per trip, and avoided 3,521 trips that would have otherwise occurred without the consolidation program.

Over that same period, health trip hours show a reduction of nearly 31,000 additional service hours and more than 3,800 in overtime hours. The cut in overtime alone represents a savings of more than \$134,000.

No annualized comparisons can be projected because the

Department cannot forecast what the medical needs of the inmate population will be in any given fiscal year: "Whatever they are," Commissioner Goord explained, "we are obligated to meet them to the 'community standard' level."

No one involved in the coordination program suggests the transportation of inmates for medical care can be completed cheaply. But all agree that the Department can make more efficient use of its resources in delivering those services.

Certain trips can't be consolidated because of the differing locations of outside providers, for example, or the protocol of moving infectious versus non-infectious inmates, or the security concerns associated with moving high-risk inmates.

"Medical sense and security judgment are paramount," Commissioner Goord said. "Our primary concern remains the health and safety of staff and ensuring the secure custody of inmates. Making the most effective use of our resources – that's the bottom line."

DOCS establishes medical transport teams

The Department's transportation challenge is daunting in the face of 65,000 inmates housed in 70 facilities spread across the state, and the need to match their medical needs with the location of the appropriate specialty medical services the law requires be made available to them.

Providing inmate health services is a major expense. The Department spent about \$238 million in the 2003-04 fiscal year treating inmates. In his proposed budget for 2004-05 Gov. Pataki increased that to about \$243 million. In fact, health care spending has grown by 63 percent since 1995, even though the inmate population has declined by 9 percent from its high point in 1999.

Last year the Department established medical transportation coordination teams in each of its regional hubs, outside of New York City. Led by a team coordinator, a deputy superintendent for security and a medical appointments scheduler and reporting to the hub supervising superintendent, their charge was to develop better, less costly ways to manage the thousands of daily inmate visits to facility clinics, Regional Medical Units, secure units in community facilities under contract to the Department and other health care providers.

Last year, for instance, nearly 72,000 inmate medical trips were recorded and 110,800 appointments were completed for specialty services not available through primary care health units at Department facilities.

Personnel costs for security for medical transportation totaled \$18,347,150 in fiscal 2002-2003, including \$10,586,160 for 529,308 regular hours, \$3,555,260 for 177,763 additional services hours and \$4,205,730 for 140,191 overtime hours. The numbers do not include the cost of backfilling the jobs of addi-

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Physician at a remote site examines inmate's hand via telemedicine.

Continued from previous page

tional officers assigned to medical transport duties. They also do not attempt to capture expenses for operating the fleet of vehicles taking inmates to and from appointments.

Functioning like something of a dispatcher for a giant car pool, the medical transportation coordination teams attempt to integrate the scheduling of appointments of inmates from the same or adjacent facilities with the delivery system. Their goal is to consolidate trips so that all appointments are made on time and all inmates returned safely to their prisons. The goal is akin to the public transportation sector's attempt to make maximum use of available seats.

The functions of the teams include consolidating trips where possible, coordinating inmate appointments to maximize the use of on-site clinics and transport to those off-site, increasing the use of telemedicine where appropriate, ensuring the availability of staff to transport inmates to the treatment site, ensuring that scheduling allows inmates from adjacent facilities to travel together and coordinating staff resources from several facilities to minimize the need for individual inmate transport.

Coordinating outside medical resources

DOCS decided in 1999 to transition from contracts with managed care organizations to having employees oversee and manage the delivery of coordinated specialty care (CSC) services to inmates.

That led to the creation of CSC with the DOCS Division of Health Services and a medical claims processing (MCP) in the Division of Budget and Finance. CSC oversees the delivery of inmate health care services – network development, contract management, referrals and the scheduling of appointments. MCP handles payment for them – claims from the nearly 1,000 providers within the network that provides specialty medical care to inmates.

Specialty services are those not available through the infirmaries, primary care health units, at individual facilities. Specialty services are the same sorts of medical care available in the community by referral from a general practitioner or a primary care doctor.

The specialty clinics with the greatest inmate patient volume are for physical therapy; eye care; bone and muscle problems; infectious disease; foot problems; stomach-intestinal disorders; general surgery; skin disorders; urinary tract problems; ear, nose and throat cases, and heart illness.

Inmates are first seen at a facility infirmary by a Department doctor who functions as the primary care physician. If outside services are considered necessary, the doctor submits a referral to the utilization review process. DOCS has a contract with the University of Texas Medical Branch at Galveston for an outside, independent review to determine if the requested specialty service is consistent with the community standard of care – the governing legal threshold that states must meet in delivering inmate health care.

If the referral is approved, DOCS central health staff schedules a medical appointment and coordinates the inmate's trans-

port with security personnel. Last year approximately 154,600 inmate appointments were scheduled as the result of roughly 133,800 referrals.

Of those totals, some 110,800 appointments were completed – including 86,600 at DOCS on-site clinics and telemedicine clinics, 15,000 at hospitals with secure holding areas under contract with the Department, and the remainder with other providers. In 2002 nearly 113,000 appointments were completed.

The Department maintains Regional Medical Units (RMUs) at Bedford, Coxsackie, Fishkill, Walsh (within the perimeter at Mohawk) and Wende where inmates are seen by specialists for both outpatient and inpatient services. All the RMUs have outpatient clinics, infirmaries for short term treatment and units for long term care with a total of 312 beds.

Inmates who require treatment beyond that available at an RMU are admitted to secure units at tertiary care hospitals under contract with the Department. They include Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse, Staten Island University Hospital, Erie County Medical Center, Wyoming County Hospital and Albany Medical Center. Plans are underway to contract for a secure unit at Mount Vernon Hospital as well.

Inmates are sometimes admitted to community hospitals in an emergency. Once their condition is stabilized they are transferred to the appropriate Department facility for follow-up care.

In a further effort to enhance the delivery of care and reduce costs, DOCS has actively pursued telemedicine opportunities.

For example, DOCS has a contract with Erie County Medical Center's telemedicine department in Buffalo for emergency

Commissioner Goord: "The reduction of trips enhances security, as there are fewer opportunities for accidents, escapes and other events ..."

assessment statewide outside normal hours. The program began in 1999 for coverage in western New York and has expanded to include all maximum- and medium-security facilities.

Doctors located in Buffalo use the system to diagnose inmates in distant prisons to determine if their condition requires immediate admission to a local emergency room.

If admission is indicated, the doctors in Buffalo contact the outside emergency room near the prison with their findings and preliminary diagnosis. If medical staff determine that an inmate's medical condition can await transport during normal business hours, the overtime expense of transporting and guarding the inmate for a special trip is avoided.

The Department also uses telemedicine at RMUs for consultations with specialists, again with the goal of reducing the time and expense of inmate transport and making specialty care more available. Last year health services recorded 4,600 telemedicine consultations, a 23 percent increase from the previous year.

Scheduling appointments and transporting inmates is expensive, so inmates are required to sign a contract agreeing to keep the appointment or face possible disciplinary action. Directive 4308, which describes the contract requirements, stresses that inmates who fail to give adequate notice for canceling an appointment are not being disciplined for refusing medical care, but rather for failing to meet their contract responsibilities. 

Academy trains nation's best force of Correction Officers

8 weeks in Albany, 3 in prison help COs acquire a wide variety of needed skills

As many as 1,300 CO recruits could pass through the Training Academy in Albany in the coming fiscal year – about double last year's rate – as the Department receives on-going authorization to fill positions vacated by the approximately 30 officers who leave state service through normal attrition during each two-week payroll period.

Recent Academy graduates say the new recruits will find the program challenging, demanding, thorough – and excellent preparation for the careers upon which they are about to embark.

"Everything that they told me at the Academy might come up, has come up, or the officers here tell me will come up," said newly-minted Fishkill CO Sean Evans at the completion of his second week of the three weeks of on-the-job training (OJT) required following graduation from the eight-week course at the Academy.

Classmate Randy Duprey echoed that sentiment at the same point in his OJT commitment being fulfilled at Eastern. "Everything they taught us applies very well at the facilities, as far as I've seen. I think the program gets you ready for what's going on here. They tell you exactly everything you need to know," he said.

CO Andrea McCoy of Queens, who spoke from Bedford Hills where she was assigned for OJT, said she found the military atmosphere of the Academy a difficult experience at first, but she understood the reasons for it.

"In the beginning it was tough, but you adjust," she related. "Everything has to be perfect. It taught us to be very responsible, to let you know you have to do everything you're supposed to do."

"The most challenging for me was the legal and the weapons, then the interpersonal communications training."

If she was surprised by anything with her OJT experience, it was that working conditions in the facility were not nearly as bad as she had expected. "They prepare

you for the worst," she said. Bedford Hills became her permanent assignment.

CO Latasha Johnson also did her OJT at Bedford Hills and was also initially challenged by the military aspects of the training program. "When I first walked into the door to the Academy I was overwhelmed. I thought I was going home that night," she said.

But the program became easier with time, she said. "I began to enjoy it."

The most difficult aspect of the program for her was the weapons training, since she had no experience with firearms. That too grew easier as she became more comfortable. But she did not enjoy training on the use of chemical agents: "Oh God, I've never

experienced anything so overwhelming. But I realized it's our friend, it's for our safety."

Like CO McCoy, she also found conditions at Bedford Hills easier than she had anticipated. "I think the Academy prepped us well," she said.

While the new COs agreed on the thoroughness of the Academy's training, some also wished the program could be longer.

CO Duprey, who won his class's award for firearms proficiency, said he would have preferred another day on the firing range for rifle and shotgun training but recognizes that revolver training has to take priority.

CO Evans, who was honored by his peers with the class leadership award, had a more general observation. "Just when we finally got all the rules and everything else straight we were gone," he said.

Course is rigorous, comprehensive

The CO course is a rigorous, comprehensive program of classroom learning, physical conditioning and weapons training, conducted in a military-style environment. It is designed to teach recruits the basic skills they will need on the job and to instill in them a sense of professionalism about themselves and their work.

"From Day One I tell them the rules have to be followed whether you like them or not," said Sgt.

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Drills and weapons training are as integral for recruits as is the ongoing training for sergeants shown in bottom photo.



Professional standards still evolving after 80 years of experience

Informal practices of a century ago transformed into standardized program

The Department's current training program for COs is the legacy of nearly 80 years of changing times, growing needs and improving standards in the professional development of Correction Officers.

The former Mater Christi Roman Catholic seminary in Albany has been home to the Training Academy since 1973, but the evolution of recruit preparedness goes back much farther.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, training for guards in the state prison system was an informal process. Instruction was primarily an on-the-job affair with new guards learning the ropes from more seasoned employees. From time to time professionals in the corrections field called for more formal training, but not much resulted from the recommendations.

Then, in 1927, New York created a Department of Correction and gave its cabinet-level commissioner authority over the state's then-four prisons (Auburn, Sing Sing, Clinton and Great Meadow), its adult reformatories (Albion, Elmira and Bedford), the hospitals for the mentally insane (Matteawan and Dannemora), and the institution for defective delinquents at Napanoch.

Two years later, following inmate uprisings at Clinton and Auburn that claimed 14 lives and destroyed property, the state appointed a commission to investigate the prison system.

It was named the Lewisohn Commission for its chairman, Sam A. Lewisohn, a member of the State Commission of Correction. Other notable members were Corrections Commissioner Dr. Walter N. Thayer, Jr., and Dr. Walter M. Wallack, who would later become warden at Wallkill. All three men eventually served as president of the American Prison Association, forerunner to today's American Correctional Association (ACA).

The Lewisohn Commission wrote a blueprint for the future. Prisons would become institutions devoted to rehabilitation using progressive programs of classification, individualized study and treatment, and educational and vocational training. The commission recommended reduced security facilities – Wallkill opened in 1932 – and a stronger central adminis-

tration.

The commission also recommended formal staff training, particularly since guards would be expected to assist in the rehabilitation of inmates. Four-week in-service programs were started in 1931 at Auburn, Sing Sing, Clinton, Great Meadow and the just-opened Attica. These schools were eventually extended to other facilities and summer sessions for physical instruction were added.

The in-service schools were modest improvements by today's standards. Officers, who were already working six days and more than 60 hours a week, had to attend the schools on their own time.

Wallkill first central training site

A big change came in 1936 with the passage of legislation, to take effect July 1, 1937, creating an eight-hour work day for employees of prisons, state hospitals and other institutions. The Department determined the reduction in work hours would create a demand for 536 new guards. Corrections Commissioner Edward P. Mulrooney turned the challenge into an opportunity to organize a central training school.

The new Wallkill Prison was selected as the site for the Central Guard School. The prison was centrally located and, as the system's only reduced-security facility, it had no walls or tightly guarded gates to hinder the activities of instructors and trainees.

The Central Guard School opened in November 1936 with 80 recruits. They were put through a new eight-week, 320-hour course that focused on communications skills, principles of human behavior and the operations of the criminal justice system. Recruits were also trained daily in military drill, physical conditioning and the use of weapons.

A year later eight-week sessions were offered to staff who had been hired before the school began. There were restrictions: participants could be no more than 34 years old and had to pay their own expenses.

While the New York City corrections department had begun a "keepers school" in 1927, the Central Guard School was the first of its kind operated by a state prison system. Staff from across the state were used as instructors to help create a unified



Main entrance to the Training Academy.

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Civilian employees among those trained at former seminary ...

Newly-hired workers undergo orientation

Some 40 new civilian employees went through a two-day orientation program at the Training Academy in late February to help them understand how DOCS functions and how they can play their role in ensuring the Department's success in meeting its mission.

The civilian employee training is an example of just one of the purposes of the Academy besides its primary role of preparing Correction Officer recruits for their new careers.

On the first day, speakers gave an overview of and answered questions about the Department's mission and its main responsibilities. Topics that were covered included health and program services for inmates, labor relations, facility operations and security, personnel procedures, diversity management and sexual harassment.

John Sheridan, director of Central Office health services, told the new employees the Department's mission is the "humane incarceration" of inmates in its custody. Last year DOCS medical staff provided more than one million primary care encounters to inmates and coordinated nearly 111,000 appointments with specialists.

He said 52 video conferencing units are dedicated to health services and the Department is on track for about 5,000 video medical consultations in 2004. "Telemedicine has been a real home run for inmate health care and the economy of resources," he said.

Anthony Sumigray, senior reviewer for the Earned Eligibility Program that allows the early release of deserving inmates, described the review process that determines the most appropriate programming for inmates. He said the goal is to develop meaningful employment skills through academic and vocational programs. He said experience proves that mandatory programming improves inmate behavior and reduces the chances they will return to prison after being released.

From a facility operations perspective, security staff discussed the Corrections Emergency Response Teams, the Crisis Intervention Unit and other aspects of running the prisons safely and securely.

The second day of the program featured tours of the medium-security Greene and maximum-security Cocksackie facilities. Employees had a chance to see first-hand some of the programs and meet some of the field staff they are supporting in their own jobs.

Cocksackie Superintendent Gary Fillion and Greene Superintendent Joe David welcomed the group, which was divided in two sections so the prison tours could be conducted simultaneously. The superintendents described the day-to-day operation of their facilities and pointed out some of the differences between medium- and maximum-security operations.

For example, Mr. David pointed out that Greene's general population is housed in military-style barracks while similar inmates are housed in cells at Cocksackie.

Academy trains throughout the year

While the Training Academy's most intensive program is the eight-week course for CO recruits, the facility is also the scene for other activities throughout the year for security and civilian staff alike.

An in-service training program is conducted as needed for instructors who will teach recruits and provide in-service training for all other staff as well. These courses cover firearms, chemical agents, baton use and unarmed defensive tactics. Most instructors are COs on leave from their regular jobs.

A two-week school for new sergeants is generally conducted three or four times a year. The Academy offers a one-week course for new lieutenants, generally held twice a year, and an annual program for new captains.

Courses for civilian staff include annual executive team training for new deputy superintendents, and both mandatory and optional training for the approximately 750 employees in Central Office.

Fulfilling training requirements is a key standard in the American Correctional Association accreditation process. Commissioner Goord determines the topics to be covered in the eight-hour mandatory course that staff must complete during the coming year. In 2003-2004 the focus is on terrorism awareness and emergency control procedures.

Another eight hours of training falls under the umbrella of professional and personal development. Courses at the Academy last year covered a variety of topics, including basics of supervision, the civil service merit system, resume preparation, interviewing tips, conducting effective meetings, effective business writing, and time and stress management techniques, among others.

Training is also conducted at regional centers in each hub under the coordination of training lieutenants. That is where most civilian training takes place, an activity that has been shifted from the Academy in recent years for budgetary reasons. Local training cuts down on travel expenses and the amount of time trainees spend away from their home facilities. 

After the tour one of the new employees said she took note of the programs available to inmates. "I was impressed by the educational opportunities for inmates, almost to the point of being a little jealous," she said.

Others welcomed the chance to learn from COs directly involved with inmates and to see for themselves the source of some of the issues that are part of their job responsibilities, such as inmate grievances.

The previous orientation program for new employees was in October 2002. 

... while veteran officers recall era when training was non-existent

On the day he reported to Green Haven for his first day of work as an officer, Russell Graham recalls, he rounded a bend in the road, climbed a hill and encountered the prison's 30-foot wall. He remembers it was raining at the time, and the wall changed colors as the rain fell down its side.

"As I came up that hill and saw the front of the building, there was a great wall. I'll tell you, my heart was beating," he said. He was 28 at the time, working in construction where the money was good but the benefits were not.

That was in 1964, the start of a DOCS career that continues to this day. Officer Graham is now Sgt. Graham, a position he has held since 1982. The 28-year-old recruit at Green Haven is now a 68-year-old veteran serving in the Coxsackie Regional Medical Unit.

Much has changed at DOCS during his tenure, certainly including training.

When he began, there was none.

Wearing the uniform he had purchased at a store (officers supplied their own clothing at the time) he arrived at the prison and was taken to see the warden. He spent half a day filling out paperwork, then received his baton and was sent to the block officer for his orders. That was the extent of his formal training.

"It was pretty scary, I'll tell you that. You didn't know what to expect," said Sgt. Graham. "You had to prove yourself to the officers you worked with."

Bob Murphy recently retired as assistant director of Special Housing in Albany. He tells a similar story of when he began as an officer at Green Haven in 1967, again with the wall rising up before him on the day he reported.

"I thought, my God, what have I gotten myself into? It looked scary. This is for real."

Like Sgt. Graham, with whom he would eventually car pool to work, Mr. Murphy was escorted to the warden's office to fill out his papers and then sent to the basement at Green Haven for weapons "training."

Did he know how to handle a shotgun? Yes, he replied, and

he fired off a shell to demonstrate. "You're trained," the officer declared.

Did he know how to fire a Thompson submachine gun? He did not, so he was told to try. His first effort was not satisfactory. He was told to fire in short bursts, and did so. "You're trained," the officer ruled.

Firing the third weapon, a gas gun, was out of the question because the gas would fill the building, so he was simply shown how it was loaded and fired. And once again, "You're trained."

With that, Mr. Murphy was told to report to a block where he would be shown how to run a company of inmates. He began work that night.

Ironically, when it came to training, standards had declined instead of improved over a generation. Mr. Murphy's father had joined DOCS during a period when formal training was required. He went through the Central Guard School at Wallkill, which closed by the time his son became an Officer.

While both negative and positive changes have taken place in prison life during his years, Sgt. Graham said, conditions now are clearly better for both officers and inmates.

He described the system when he started as "a warehouse-type of situation, a pressure cooker." COs at the time had and were expected to exercise more authority, but by today's standards inmates had little to do. They were locked in their cells from right after dinner until the next morning. The system bred resentment.

"You knew something was going to happen sooner or later," he said, "you just didn't know when." Attica

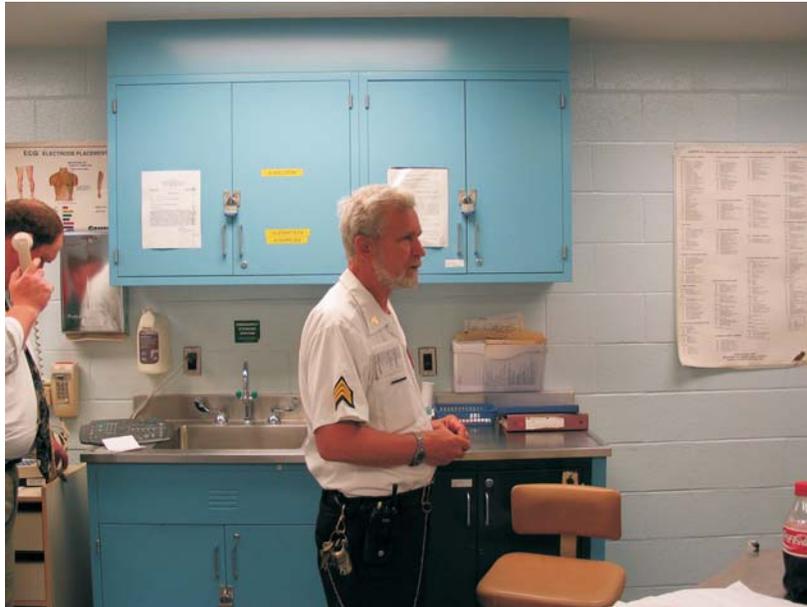
turned out to be when. Many of today's programs, procedures and policies followed.

"We have a lot more tools today," he said, citing better equipment, radios, personal alarm systems, schooling and training for officers, and programs and services for inmates.

Still, no matter the preparation and tools, experience will always play a part in how well an officer handles his responsibilities, he said. "There are some things you could never teach."

Sgt. Graham offers one piece of advice to new COs: "What they should teach them is don't ever become complacent in these places." 

"We have a lot more tools today," says Sgt. Graham, who adds "There are some things you could never teach."



Sgt. Russell Graham on duty at Coxsackie.

Facility Highlights

Inmates perfecting valuable asbestos removal skills from *Corcraft*

Program teaches proper techniques

Inmates who participate in good standing in the Department's asbestos abatement program earn a valuable ticket toward a potential job when they are released. They each earn a license as a trained asbestos handler, having met in prison the legal requirements to work in that field on the outside.

In keeping with federal law, anyone who is employed in New York in the handling of asbestos products must be properly trained and licensed by the state. Some 185 inmates in 19 facilities already satisfy that standard. They work in the asbestos abatement program operated by *Corcraft*, the Department's manufacturing division.

Despite a lack of hard data, anecdotal evidence suggests former inmates are finding good jobs when they return to their home communities. The state Labor Department lists asbestos handling among the fast-growing occupations in New York City.

Fred Steup, assistant industrial superintendent at Mid-Orange and statewide manager of the asbestos abatement program, said DOCS has earned a reputation in the industry for training quality asbestos handlers. At the same time, the program saves the Department money because its costs are less than the private sector can offer.

"Everybody in the industry has heard of us. Everyone knows

Inmates complete boiler pipe asbestos removal project in photo at right while, below, inmate hoses down town hall prior to asbestos shingle removal.



about *Corcraft*," he said. "In this case the connection to DOCS is a positive, not a negative, if inmates left us in good standing."

The asbestos program started in 1991 with five teams and has since grown to 22 teams in 19 facilities. During that period the program's charges for its services rose from \$567,525 in its first year to more than \$4 million last year. Nearly 1,000 inmates have worked in the program since it started.

Facilities currently involved in the program include Adirondack, Albion, Attica, Auburn, Butler, Clinton, Coxsackie, Eastern, Elmira, Fishkill, Great Meadow, Green Haven, Groveland, Hudson, Mid-Orange, Mid-State, Mt. McGregor, Sing Sing and Woodbourne.

Teams generally consist of six to eight inmates, but can be as large as 10. Most teams work only in their own facilities. However, five prisons – Butler, Hudson, Mid-Orange, Mid-State

Continued on facing page

Continued from previous page

and Mt. McGregor – have teams that are cleared to work for other government entities.

Common projects involve removing or containing asbestos materials in floor and ceiling tiles, steam pipes, air ducts, tunnels, plumbing parts and heating plant equipment. Mr. Steup said a typical job would be handling materials that need to be removed as part of a heating system replacement.

Asbestos fibers can cause scarring of the lungs and have been linked to lung cancer. In order to prevent fibers from becoming airborne, workers who are handling the asbestos must be specially trained and use proper equipment. Waste products must be transported by licensed haulers and disposed of in licensed landfills.

Since the law requires that asbestos handlers be at least 18 years old, inmates entering the DOCS program must meet that standard as well. And since it takes 12 to 18 months to become skilled in the job, the program looks for inmates with two years or more remaining on their sentence. Inmates must agree to stay in the program at least 12 months. They must also have a high school or GED diploma. Inmates with a record of disciplinary problems are not accepted.

Mr. Steup said the formation of a new asbestos crew generally draws 50 to 100 applications. Candidates are put through a security screening. If they meet security standards, they go through a medical exam for fitness to be licensed as asbestos handlers. Finally, if candidates clear all the screening, they are interviewed before being accepted into the program.

Four days of training and passing a written exam are required before an inmate can start work as a handler. Once a year there is a one-day training course to re-certify the license holder. The Department pays the \$30 annual license fee to the Department of Labor. Mr. Steup said *Corcraft* pays more than \$50,000 a year in various licensing fees and between \$40,000 and \$50,000 for training services.

While most of the program's work involves jobs inside DOCS facilities, Commissioner Goord can approve the outside crews to work for other state agencies, local governments and non-profit organizations.

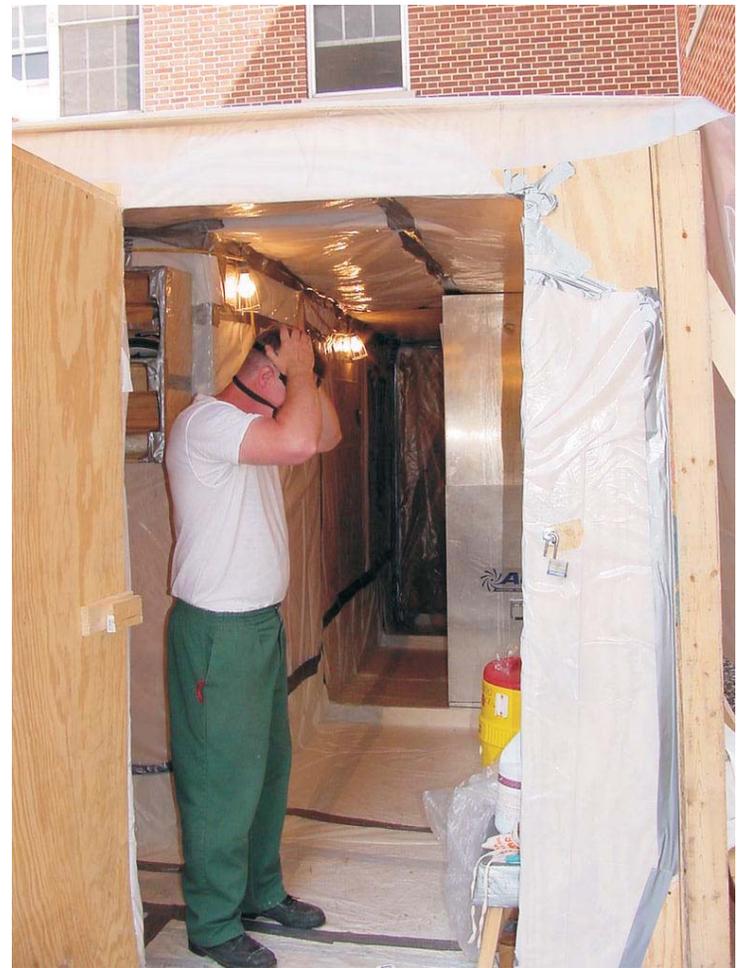
One recent project involved rehabilitation of the Gardiner Town Hall in Ulster County, which is on the state and federal registers of historic buildings. An asbestos team from Hudson removed asbestos shingles and floor tiles while a construction team from Beacon also worked on the building, prompting a letter of gratitude from the town supervisor to Commissioner Goord.

“Your staff and residents conducted themselves in an exemplary manner. They were on time, courteous, professional and completely competent,” the town supervisor wrote. “They treated the building with a respect that was worthy of its old age. I compliment them highly and appreciate their efforts.”

An asbestos handler's license is marked “inmate” while they



are in the Department's custody. After they have been released the Department of Labor mails a new license with “inmate” removed. 📖



Inmate seals negative air channel to prevent asbestos release, above, while inmate in lower photo dons mask before entering work area.

Academy trains ...

Continued from page 6

Lewis Bloom, Recruit Sergeant and a 20-year veteran of the Department. "It's all about being fair, firm and consistent. You do that and you stay a 'Correction Officer.' If you don't, you fast become a 'prison guard.'

"We give them the basics and they continue learning when they're out in the field," he added.

The program consists of eight weeks at the Training Academy followed by three weeks of OJT training at a medium- or maximum-security facility, where recruits receive hands-on guidance from experienced officers and supervisors. The Department then assigns the new COs where they are needed.

Under the seniority provisions of the state's contract with Correction Officers, recruits have no say in where their first jobs will be: as the least-senior officers, the Department assigns them to fill vacancies wherever they exist. As the new officers gain seniority, their assignment options increase.

The CO recruit program operates Monday through Friday at the Academy. A typical day begins at 6:30 a.m. when recruits report to a classroom and their session leader. There are no wake-up calls or bells. Recruits are expected to get themselves to their assignments on time.

Mess hall doors open at 6:45 a.m. for breakfast. The morning count is conducted at 7:45 a.m. Classes begin at 8:10 a.m. and run through the morning.

Lunch is around noontime and is staggered so that not all recruits are in line at the same time.

Following the noon meal, the afternoon count is at 12:45 p.m. and classes resume at 1:10 p.m. and continue until physical training from 4 to 5 p.m., after which dinner is served. ("The food was all right. The salad bar was good," said CO Duprey).

Recruits are on their own after the evening meal but must be signed back into the Academy building by 10:45 p.m. and in their rooms by 11 p.m.

Academy rooms are dormitory-style, with two or four recruits to a room. On Fridays the recruits leave, taking all their possessions with them because room assignments can change over the weekend. They are expected to dress professionally when checking in on Sunday night or out on Friday afternoon.

"They arrive in suits and they leave in suits," said Sgt. Bloom.

Recruits are paid at an annual rate of \$28,444. Pay rises to \$30,043 after six months and to \$34,742 after 26 pay periods.

Modules organize training

The training program is based on eight modules, each consisting of a week, that cover the basics of what COs need to know to meet their professional responsibilities. The subject matter list is broad. It includes contraband control, inmate counts, interpersonal communications skills, correctional dynamics, recognizing abnormal behavior, diversity appreciation, teamwork, Department structure and policies, and legal and health issues, among many others.

This list of topics covered in each module serves as an overview of the skills the COs must possess and the duties they will perform:

Module 1: personnel, superintendent and director, introduction to diversity management and sexual harassment, department forms, fire and safety orientation, facility tour, note taking, attendance rules, counting inmates, fire and safety/hazardous materials right to know, NYSOPBA, health services.

Module 2: facility communication, standards of inmate behavior, report writing, receiving inmates, attitudes in supervision, female offenders, decision making, tool/key control, inmate packing procedures, cultural awareness.

Module 3: baton training, transportation, use of force, chemical agents, legal authority and responsibility, Department policies and procedures in security areas, inmate correspondence.

Module 4: Department policy regarding firearms, general information on firearm safety and firearm rules and regulations, revolver and shotgun training.

Module 5: devoted to legal issues: constitutional law, penal law, civil law, powers of a peace officer, eyewitness and rules of evidence, accusatory instruments, search and seizure, court structure, testifying in court, ethics/graft/bribery, indemnification, leadership and motivation, laws of arrest, interrogation statements, preliminary investigation, physical evidence, DOCS legal issues.

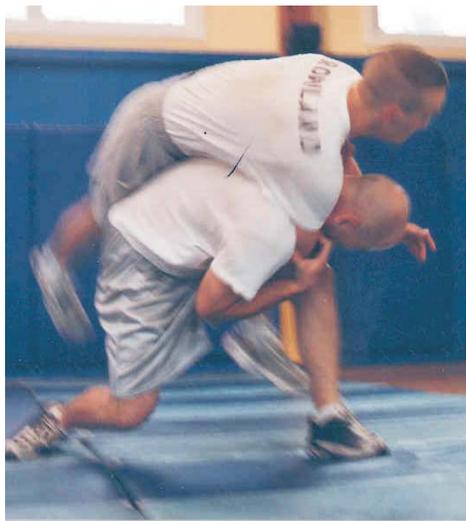
Module 6: correctional dynamics, CPR, first aid, inappropriate behavior, defensive tactics.

Module 7: religious groups, supervision in general housing, visiting room procedures, drug awareness, contraband and frisk, objective observation, stress management, Municipal Police Training Council/DOCS policies on legal issues, correctional dynamics for officers.

Module 8: Inmate grievance resolution committee, RECAB (recognizing, evaluating and controlling aggressive behavior), labor relations, recognizing abnormal behavior, mental health, program services, Corrections Emergency Response



Learning CPR at the Academy.



Self-defense is another critical class.

Continued on next page

Professional standards ...

Continued from page 7

system from the Department's various institutions.

In spite of its success in professionalizing the staff, the Central Guard School died under the budget ax and closed in 1939. Funding was restored the following year, but the school at Wallkill closed forever in April 1942. Wartime restrictions on travel were in place. And competing military inductions made recruitment and training a lost cause.

During the war years, civilians were hired and served as officers until the "regular" officers returned from military service. And with the mass return of guards at the end of the war, recruiting new officers was not a priority. Recruit training soon slipped into its pre-Wallkill status.

In the absence of a strong centralized training program, individual facilities began to develop their own programs in the mid-1950s. While some were good, they were inconsistent. One in-service program that did last for some time was the Moran Institute, started in 1947 on the campus of St. Lawrence University in Canton. Parole Board chairman Frederick A.

Continued from previous page

Team/Crisis Intervention Unit, sexual harassment, health services, chaplains/accreditation, overview of the criminal justice system, importance of proper reports, adolescent behavior, assignment/reassignment, OJT briefing, suicide prevention.

Varying views on OJT

Courses are taught by veteran officers on leave from their regular facility posts. Except for the final week, when graduation ceremonies bring the training course to an end, each Friday afternoon includes an examination on that week's module. The recruits report to their OJT assignments Monday morning following graduation. Three weeks later, they receive their permanent assignment.

Some of the new COs view their permanent assignment as the first step in a career path they hope will eventually take them back home.

CO Duprey, assigned to Eastern, is from Schuylers Falls near Plattsburgh and hopes ultimately to be assigned to Clinton so he can return to the North Country. His father is a CO at Bare Hill.

CO Johnson, whose permanent assignment was Beacon, is anxious to make her way back to Buffalo, where her family lives and where she is a year away from earning a degree in criminal justice from Buffalo State College. "I think this is just a beginning for me. I see myself staying in the criminal justice field," she said.

For others, like CO Evans, who is from Auburn, the goal lies in the opposite direction. His assignment to Fishkill was ideal, he said. Apartments are considerably more expensive than he was used to in Central New York, but he's confident he'll manage. "This gave me a chance to explore new opportunities and another part of the state. The Catskills are right outside and New York City is close by. I'm tickled pink." 



Training Sergeant makes a point with recruits.

Moran had played a leading role in creating the institute and it was named for him following his death in 1952.

The last Moran Institute was held in 1970 when plans were being made to bring correctional training up to modern standards. Meanwhile, in late 1965, the Department had resumed formal recruit training with a three-week, 120-hour program at an academy where Beacon now stands. About a dozen sessions were held each year.

New Department, new commitment to training

On Jan. 1, 1971, the state's adult institutional and parole agencies merged into the new Department of Correctional Services. Nine months later came the Attica riot. Both in New York and nationally, the Attica experience produced public support and money for reform of correctional practices. The value of comprehensive professional training was recognized. With federal grants supplementing state funds, the Department expanded recruit training to 13 weeks. The first class under the expanded program was graduated June 6, 1972, having trained at the State Police Academy.

Recognizing the need for its own facilities, the Department entered into a lease with the Diocese of Albany for the former Mater Christi seminary to create the Training Academy in Albany. The Department bought the property in 1987. Meanwhile, various state and private properties continued to be used as temporary auxiliary training sites through the 1980s.

The length of training vacillated from the 13-week standard down to as few as three weeks in 1979. In 1992, it became 11 weeks – seven at the Academy and four weeks of on-the-job training (OJT) in facilities. 



Instructor uses chalkboard to make a point.

Transitions

April 2004

Name	Title	Facility
Promotions		
Joanne Vanderlaan	Secretary 1	Albion
Felicia Washington	Calculations Clerk 2	Arthur Kill
Patricia A. Casler	Indus Training Supr 2 (UPH)	Auburn
Michael Riley	Head Cook	Bare Hill
Kimberley N. Harris	Calculations Clerk 2	Camp Pharsalia
Janet E. Distefano	Vocational Instructor 4	Cape Vincent
Amy L. Hutchinson	Principal Clerk Personnel	Cayuga
Melissa S. Smith	Senior Mail & Supply Clerk	Collins
Lisa A. Hayden	Clerk 2	Downstate
Heather Depew	Purchasing Agent Trainee	Eastern
Lynne C. Yerkes	Calculations Clerk 2	Eastern
Stephen Roberts	Dep Supt Administration 3	Fishkill
Timothy A. Quackenbush	Head Account Clerk	Fishkill
Joanne E. Hermance	Head Clerk Personnel	Fishkill
Denise Urciuoli	Calculations Clerk 2	Fishkill
Janet O. Murphy	Recreation Therapist	Fishkill
Seth S. Zawadzki	Plant Utilities Engineer 1	Five Points
Tanya Peterson	Stores Clerk 2	Fulton
Garry Basin	Plumber & Steamfitter	Fulton
Cedric C. Coulman	Indus Training Supr 2 (C)	Great Meadow
Samuel Griffin	Head Farmer	Green Haven
John Rapp	Food Administrator 1	Green Haven
Renee T. Frank	Keyboard Specialist 2	Greene
Andrea M. Quinlivan	Stores Clerk 2	Greene
Bonnie L. O'Brien	Principal Account Clerk	Groveland
Karen M. Pagano	Principal Clerk Personnel	Groveland
Andrew W. Orcutt	Supr Clothing Services	Main Office
Ellen Harris	Secretary 1	Main Office
Dorothy B. Simmons	Principal Account Clerk	Main Office

Gerard Jones	Plant Superintendent B	Main Office
Judith F. Merwin	Secretary 1	Main Office
Thomas S. Lieber	Inmate Records Coordinator 1	Mid-State
Theda Kupiec	Senior Mail & Supply Clerk	Mid-State
Kelley M. Renninger	Stores Clerk 2	Mid-State
Karen L. Eaton	Sr Utilization Review Nurse	Mohawk
Wayne W. Storms	Plant Utilities Engineer 2	Mohawk
Tammy L. Latulippe	Stores Clerk 2	Mt. McGregor
Sharon Murray	Calculations Clerk 2	Ogdensburg
Susan M. Montroy	Calculations Clerk 2	Ogdensburg
Edward R. Reiter	General Mechanic	Orleans
Frances A. Mulvenna	Clerk 2	Shawangunk
Kathleen Brunsdon	Calculations Clerk 2	Sing Sing
Catherina E. Myers	Senior Mail & Supply Clerk	Sing Sing
Dennis L. Wolfe, Jr.	Maintenance Assistant	Southport
Eileen F. Pousada	Calculations Clerk 2	Taconic
Jerry Janiec	Counselor Aide Trainee	Ulster
Lynn M. McKeon	Clerk 2	Ulster
Lori Vernooy	Stores Clerk 2	Ulster
Ellen Jock	Inmate Records Coordinator 1	Upstate
Kim Dodd	Stores Clerk 2	Wallkill
Margaret A. Givens	Calculations Clerk 2	Wallkill
Daglind Ginty	Nurse Administrator 1	Wallkill
David L. Terry	Plant Utilities Engineer 2	Washington
Brenda E. Gordon	Stores Clerk 2	Washington
Douglas A. Seaner	Commissary Clerk 3	Wende
Heidi G. Bowers	Keyboard Specialist 2	Woodbourne
Douglas C. Lowrey	Correction Lieutenant	Arthur Kill
Stephen M. Woodward	Correction Lieutenant	Beacon
Thomas J. McGuinness	Correction Lieutenant	Downstate
Charles Panko, Jr.	Correction Lieutenant	Fishkill
Edward Fagan, Jr.	Correction Lieutenant	Sing Sing
Timothy J. Flint	Correction Lieutenant	Taconic
Joseph A. Healt	Correction Lieutenant	Taconic
Joseph H. Noeth	Correction Lieutenant	Taconic
Gary Janis	Correction Sergeant	Downstate
Edwin Rice	Correction Sergeant	Taconic

Retirements

Stephen F. Coville	Motor Vehicle Operator	Albion
Patricia Chojnacki	Keyboard Specialist 1	Albion
Kathryn A. Allen	Teacher 4	Albion
George A. Phelps	Plumber & Steamfitter	Attica
Terry L. Carbarry	Indus Training Supr 2 MPM	Auburn
John Coleman	Vocational Instructor 4	Bare Hill
Susan J. Peria	Stores Clerk 2	Camp Gabriels

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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. 

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Carl Manion Mason & Plasterer Clinton
Dale E. Gordon Plant Superintendent A. Clinton
Samuel J. Gordon Education Supr (Vocational) . Clinton
Geraldine Stone Clerk 2 Eastern
Barbara J. Ebert Head Clerk Personnel Fishkill
Clement L. Lagala Education Supr (Vocational) . Fishkill
Sandra L. Breen Mail & Supply Clerk Fishkill
Ruth M. Meeuwisse Teacher 4 Fishkill
Beverly A. Harpe Nurse 2. Fishkill
Nicholas J. Serio Correction Counselor. Gouverneur
Terry W. Potter ASAT Program Asst. Great Meadow
Jerry Hanzl Indus Training Supr 2 (AMR) . Green Haven
Frank C. Meeuwisse Education Supr (General) . . Green Haven
Keith D. Perkins Dep Supt Security 3 Groveland
Merylin A. Ellis Institution Steward Hale Creek
Herbert McLaughlin Superintendent Hudson
Marie E. Meehan Counselor Trainee 1 Hudson
Roscoe White, Jr. ASAT Program Asst. Lincoln
Norman C. Bish Dep Supt Security 3 Livingston
Robert A. Meunier Tractor Trailer Operator . . . Main Office
Diane M. Pullen Senior Computer Operator . . Main Office
Mary P. Savage Affirmative Action Admin 2 . Main Office
Ronald P. Raymond Vocational Instructor 4 . . . Mohawk
Elizabeth K. Haywood Nurse Administrator 1 . . . Mohawk
Roberta Mann Nurse 2. Mohawk
Linda A. Cole Inmate Records Coordinator . Oneida
Murray F. DeMartino Vocational Instructor 2 . . . Orleans
Russell R. Miller Dep Supt Administration 3 . . Otisville
Linda J. Melick Teacher 4 Shawangunk
Terrence Ellis Senior Radiologic Tech. . . . Shawangunk
Cyril H. Rashid Chaplain Shawangunk
Janet K. Giannini Institution Steward Southport
Deborah M. Greene Inmate Records Coordinator 1 Wende
Beth A. Lovelace Institution Steward Woodbourne
Bobbie Jo Gladding Correction Captain Bedford Hills
Michael Moore Correction Lieutenant Adirondack
Richard R. Sheasby Correction Lieutenant Adirondack
Michael Bilotti Correction Lieutenant Arthur Kill
John Dolan Correction Lieutenant Bedford Hills
Gretta L. Wilkerson Correction Lieutenant Fishkill
Rochelle Tucker-Young Correction Lieutenant Fishkill
Theodore Czyz Correction Lieutenant Green Haven
Chester S. Jenkins, Jr. Correction Lieutenant Greene
Edward Lepere Correction Lieutenant Oneida
Janice McFollins Correction Lieutenant Orleans
Dale R. Sears Correction Sergeant Altona
Gary L. Ellis Correction Sergeant Attica
Lawrence Cayea Correction Sergeant Clinton

Norman R. Collins Correction Sergeant Clinton
Frederick Abare Correction Sergeant Great Meadow
Charles LaCroix Correction Sergeant Great Meadow
Jose Maldonado Correction Sergeant Green Haven
Peter J. Papula, III Correction Sergeant Mt. McGregor
Donald Perkins Correction Sergeant Washington
Jonathan Rimmer Correction Sergeant Wyoming
David Fuller Correction Officer. Adirondack
Norman P. McFaul Correction Officer. Adirondack
Frank Benpensata Correction Officer. Arthur Kill
Joseph McAleese Correction Officer. Arthur Kill
T. P. Cunningham Correction Officer. Attica
Roger L. Winters Correction Officer. Auburn
Chris Sterling Correction Officer. Bayview
John F. Morajda, Jr. Correction Officer. Pharsalia
Andrew R. Frey. Correction Officer. Pharsalia
Lawrence J. Cormier Correction Officer. Chateaugay
William C. Coolidge Correction Officer. Clinton
Robert Dashnaw Correction Officer. Clinton
William Marquis Correction Officer. Clinton
James P. Glenn Lyons Correction Officer. Downstate
Joseph Sackelos Correction Officer. Downstate
W. C. Robinson Correction Officer. Edgecombe
Terence E. Shard Correction Officer. Edgecombe
Mark J. Hillman. Correction Officer. Elmira
Gordon Kupiec Correction Officer. Georgetown
John M. Brown Correction Officer. Great Meadow
Richard P. Szymr. Correction Officer. Greene
Alan J. Snyder Correction Officer. Greene
Robert M. Dunning Correction Officer. Groveland
Marshall S. Murdock Correction Officer. Monterey Shock
P. E. Fisher. Correction Officer. Mt. McGregor
John Miller Correction Officer. Mt. McGregor
Paul M. Fennessy, Jr. Correction Officer. Ogdensburg
Bruce Hall Correction Officer. Queensboro
Peter H. Seibert Correction Officer. Sullivan
Charles K. Schmeiser Correction Officer. Ulster
Russell W. Constant Correction Officer. Ulster
James A. Hartman Correction Officer. Woodbourne

Deaths

Wesley M. Gelhorn Calculations Clerk 2 Hudson
James T. Phillips Tandem Tractor Trailer Op . . Main Office
Anthony J. Forte Clinical Physician 2. Shawangunk
James J. Konfederath Correction Officer. Attica
Lawrence H. Selover, Jr. Correction Officer. Auburn
Bruce Southworth Correction Officer. Bare Hill
David R. Moynihan Correction Officer. Elmira
Gary F. Lowery Correction Officer. Groveland
James A. Horton Correction Officer. Shawangunk 

Aquaponics teaches Albion inmates more than just fish stories

A half-ounce fish was put in a tank. About a year later it had grown into a 1-1/2 pound meal. By what percent had its body weight increased before it became someone's dinner?

Inmates in a pilot program at Albion are learning to make that calculation. They are also monitoring the chemistry of the water in the fish's tank and keeping records to measure how much food the fish ate before it became food itself for the inmates who raised it.

The project is known as aquaponics, which combines fish raising with water-based vegetable growing. About 100 baby tilapia fish were placed in a 300-gallon growing tank in the prison's horticulture unit. Most survived, and when they were harvested a year later they produced 80 pounds of tasty white meat the inmates enjoyed in a fish fry.

To keep the fish healthy and growing, Albion's female inmates were challenged to develop math and science skills, problem-solving techniques and other tools they will need in holding productive jobs.

"In order to get a job in the workplace you have to have math skills, you have to be able to solve problems, you have to be able to get along with people," said Monte Huwyler, education supervisor who began the fish project as an offshoot of the facility's horticulture program. "People need these skills to be able to survive in life."

At the same time they were raising the fish, the inmates were also growing hydroponic vegetables (grown in water rather than dirt) in an integrated project that combines the two processes.

As Mr. Huwyler explained, the fish are raised on a high-protein feed and give off toxic waste products such as ammonia. A filter using naturally-growing bacteria renders the ammonia harmless to the fish by converting it to nitrates. The nitrates are a source of fertilizer for the plants. So the plants help the fish and the fish help the plants.

Successful cultivation requires careful monitoring of the food the fish are fed and the chemistry of the water in which they are raised. With the fish and vegetables being raised in a recirculating water environment, basic plumbing skills are also called upon.

Problem solving is also required for the job. Mr. Huwyler related an incident in which a heating failure over a weekend caused the water in the fish tank to drop to 45 degrees, far below its normal 80 degrees. Inmates arrived to find the fish motionless and apparently dead. By gradually adding warm water over the next several hours they were able to revive all the fish.

"It showed the inmates you can take something that looks like a lost cause, and by thinking about it and trouble shooting you can change the outcome," he said.

The goal of aquaponics is to grow high densities of organic, pesticide-free produce in a small amount of space, in a short period of time and close to large population centers where land is not readily available for traditional agriculture. At Albion, for instance, in a 10-foot by

10-foot section the program produced 400 heads of lettuce from seed during an eight-week period. Inmates also raised radishes, beet greens, dill, basil and watercress.

The aquaponics project was begun at Albion in September 2002 and produced its first harvest of fish the following year. Some 40 inmates were involved as part of their participation in the general horticulture program. A second crop of fish was started last fall from fingerlings supplied by the Aquaculture Department of the State University College at Cobleskill.

They should be ready for harvesting late this summer.

However, the main purpose of the project is learning, not food production. Good-tasting fish and healthful vegetables are a nice byproduct, but the program's scale does not approach that of a commercial operation.

Mr. Huwyler said the project teaches and reinforces sharp observation and a respect for life cycles that are playing out right before the inmates' eyes. They are also learning skills they will need if they want to pursue job opportunities in the changing horticulture field.

"Keeping daily records, calculating feed conversions and interpreting water quality test results use math, organizational skills and problem solving," he said. "Inmates learn that plants, animals and bacteria are continuously dependent on each other. This project reinforces the notion that our dependency on adequate food sources will rely on new career fields. Employees will have to be willing to work hard, but they must also have an understanding of basic science, math and technology."

And as for the fish, "They were good." 



Albion Education Supervisor Monte Huwyler and inmate Susan Weber with tilapia fish.