DOCS TODAY

March 2003 | New York State Department of Correctional Services | Vol. 12, No. 3

Pataki budget continues prison downsizing

Governor Pataki announces at Albany's Sematech the terms of a plan to develop its high-tech future that will help grow New York's economy as part of his 2003-04 budget plan. A continuance of prison downsizing was also on the agenda when Governor Pataki unveiled his Executive Budget proposal in late January. He also called for general spending reductions to avoid tax increases.

DOCS TODAY

March 2003 Vol. 12, No. 3

Coming next month ...

Aiding Special Olympics

Protecting New Yorkers

What's News

Commentary

News from the Governor 3 *Budget plan addresses losses*

Commissioner's Commentary 4 *Plan continues prison downsizing*

Cover stories

Governor highlights public protection 6 *Avoids tax increases*

Features

Staff, inmates aid the needy 10 *Annual holiday rites continue*

Facility Profile 14 *Orleans Correctional Facility*

Parenting program expanded 18 *Osborne project opens at Albion*

Veterans program aids inmates 20 *Preparing inmates for release*

Green Haven program aids students 21 *Voc shop builds 'books to go'*

YAP finds more believers 22 *Court joins school with praise*

Transitions 23 *Staff changes*

The Back Page

If it's winter in the Northeast ... 24 *... Staff, inmates help dig out*

DOCS|TODAY is published by the New York State Department of Correctional Services: George E. Pataki, Governor of the State of New York; Glenn S. Goord, Commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services; James B. Flateau, Director of the Public Information Office; Linda M. Foglia and Michael A. Houston, Assistant Public Information Officers.

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.

CORRESPONDENCE: Should be sent to the Department of Correctional Services, Office of Public Information, Building Number Two, Room 203, 1220 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12226-2050, or to the Department's Internet address: http://www.docs.state.ny.us

PUBLICATION: DOCS|TODAY is prepared in-house via desktop composition. Camera-ready pages are sent to the Elmira Correctional Facility and published in the print shop operated by the Division of Industries (*Corcraft*).

POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to the Department of Correctional Services, Public Information Office, Building Number Two, Room 203, 1220 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12226-2050.

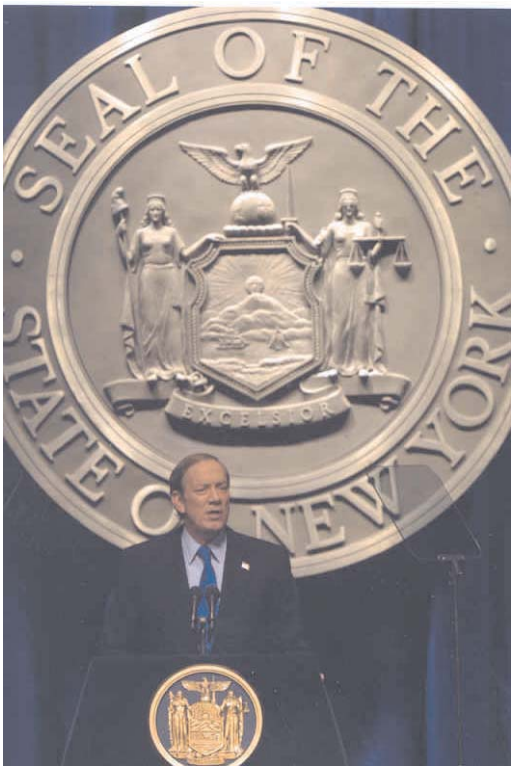
Pataki: budget plan overcomes 9-11, economic losses

Efforts of all New Yorkers needed to overcome revenue, job losses

In a January 29th letter to New Yorkers accompanying his Executive Budget proposal for Fiscal 2003-04, Governor Pataki wrote:

"The tragic events of September 11th – combined with the national economic downturn – have presented New York state with unprecedented fiscal challenges. We have suffered billions of dollars in revenue losses, and nearly 100,000 jobs have been lost due to the terrorist attacks alone. In addition, the national recession has continued far longer than virtually all economists had predicted, dramatically exacerbating the fiscal impact on New York.

"But I am confident we can overcome these challenges, revitalize our economy and move forward to secure a bright and prosperous future for all New Yorkers. We know that if we act responsibly, the crisis before us will be temporary, and if we build on the remarkable progress we've already made, the promise of the future we seek will be unlimited.



Governor Pataki presents budget plan.

"The sweeping changes, bold innovations and fiscally responsible approach to budgeting we have brought to state government during the past eight years provide a proven road map for us to follow as we chart our course to rebirth and recovery. That's why the 2003-2004 Executive Budget follows the same proven policies and prudent budgeting practices that have helped us cut taxes, control spending, increase our rainy day reserves and secure New York state's strongest credit rating in 24 years.

"The Executive Budget reduces spending; reforms Medicaid and other government programs; reduces the workforce and brings new efficiencies to state government. It also preserves promised tax cuts and avoids job-killing tax increases so that we can out-compete other states, encourage new investments and help create thousands of new jobs. It will also continue our aggressive, pro-growth policies that have helped make New York state an international leader in high-tech and biotechnology economic growth and job creation.

"The aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks showed the world that when New Yorkers are strong, united and share a common purpose they can overcome any challenge. We have faced extreme adversity in the past, and we have prevailed. It is in this spirit of unity, non-partisanship and common purpose that I am proud to present the 2003-2004 Executive Budget. I look forward to working with the members of the Legislature – and with all New Yorkers – as we work together to successfully confront the challenges ahead," he said.

The budget the Governor proposed will ensure New York state overcomes the unprecedented fiscal challenges it faces due to the September 11th terrorist attacks and the national recession, while also maintaining the state's commitment to tax cuts to spur new job creation and economic growth.

The Executive Budget is a fiscally responsible, growth-oriented plan that closes a two-year, $11.5 billion budget gap with a balanced combination of spending reductions and other actions – while avoiding new job-killing taxes in order to strengthen the state's economy and create new jobs.

Governor Pataki said, "Today, I urge you to stand with me and send the right message to the New Yorkers who are worried about their jobs, to those who need jobs, and to the entrepreneurs who create jobs: let's take the option of raising job-killing taxes off the table on Day One.

"None of us want to make cuts to our most precious programs and projects, many of which I have personally championed. But we know there is only one way to lift New York out of this fiscal crisis – by creating private sector jobs that are the foundation for public sector resources. After all, we've spent eight years making the right decisions so we could make record investments in these programs. Making these tough choices will require courage, leadership and honesty.

"Nothing would send a stronger and more positive message to the people of New York than our willingness to stand together and say with one voice: we will meet these challenges; we will make the tough decisions; and together, we will lead New York to its greatest day. If we have the courage to do that, then – ironically – the budget we will ultimately be proudest of will be the one we wish we never had to pass," he concluded

The Executive Budget will, among other accomplishments:

- Implement $177 million in previously enacted tax cuts and propose new high-tech tax initiatives to create jobs and spur economic growth;
- Protect New Yorkers by increasing funds for public/homeland security;
- Reduce agency spending through cost-cutting, consolidations/mergers and other actions, and
- Reform Medicaid to lower costs and save counties $555 million over the next two years.

Governor's budget plan continues prison downsizing

More nonviolent felons could earn release under programs that cut crime, recidivism

Governor Pataki's DOCS budget proposal protects the public by ensuring even more inmates leave prison with the tools necessary to succeed on the outside.

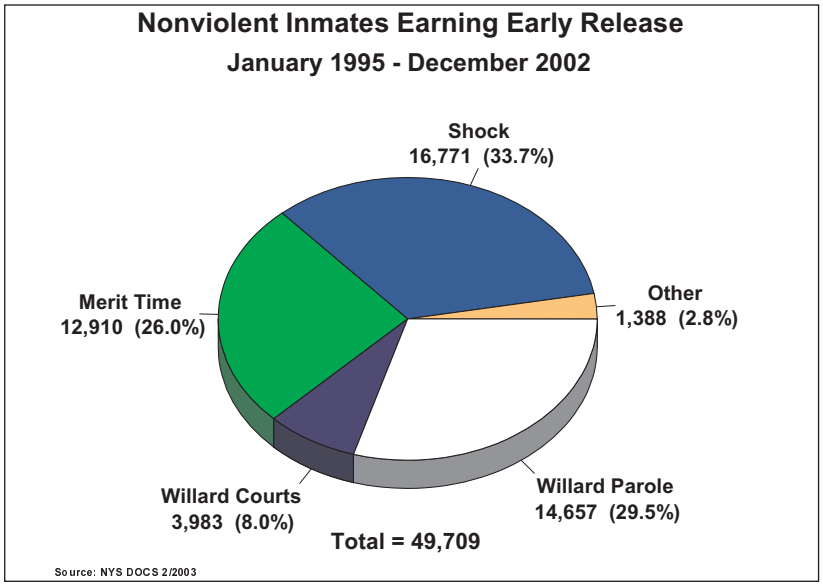
Whether these initiatives save money or not, the Governor is commited to expanding upon his policies that have contributed to an historic 46 percent decline in violent crime since he took office in 1995.

The downsizing would also lead to the attrition of 416 employees. Other initiatives would result in the attrition of another 76 positions for a total of 492 fewer positions.

His initiatives would expand the pool of nonviolent inmates who are eligible for Merit Time off their minimum sentences and those eligible for the Earned Eligibility Program which increases chances of inmate release upon completion of minimum sentences.

Gov. Pataki greets Commissioner Goord before budget speech.

The Governor's plan would increase the number of earned releases by approximately 1,300 nonviolent offenders in the fiscal year beginning on April 1. Combined with a net reduction of 600 releases over admissions, the prison population is projected to be 65,100 inmates by April of next year. That means the population will have dropped 9 percent from its high of 71,754 in April 2000.



Public safety more important than inmate reduction

The downsizing of the prison system is occuring slower than the drop to 66,600 inmates that we projected by April of last year. However, as the Governor has repeatedly said, public safety and limiting earned early release to only the most-deserving of nonviolent offenders are more important than attaining any projected goal in the inmate population.

The Governor's policies have already contributed to the early release of nearly 50,000 nonviolent offenders. And their success is beyond doubt:

- Inmates who complete these programs return to prison at a rate as much as 32 percent lower than for those who do not complete programs.
- From 1988 to 1998, the rate inmates return to prison for new crimes within three years has declined by 33 percent.

That is good news for the people of New York state – it confirms Governor Pataki's earned release programs are reducing crime by better preparing inmates for release.

It also means that his policies have been more effective in reducing crime than were the policies of his predecessor, who built 37,535 prison beds while recidivism and crime increased.

In addition, while 71 percent of inmates were incarcerated for violent offenses in 1983, that fell to 51 percent by 1995. Governor Pataki's sentencing policies have begun to reverse that trend, with 55 percent of today's offenders serving time for violent crimes.

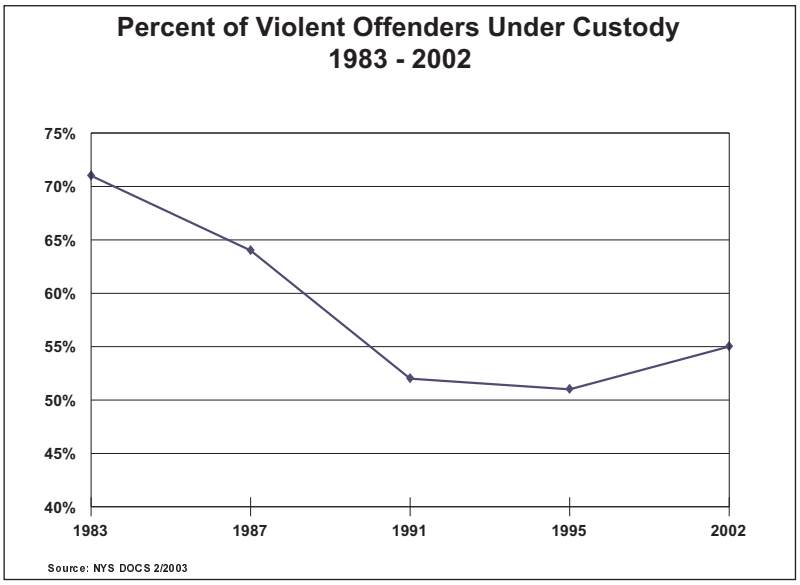
The percentage of violent offenders in the system is expected to continue to rise as more and more of them are sentenced to longer, determinate sentences under the Governor's sentencing reforms.

Governor Pataki has kept his pledge to "right-size" the prison population by:

- Building 4,850 maximum-security beds, the most by any Governor, to ensure we have the general confinement cells to house violent felons coming to prison, and the disciplinary housing beds for those inmates who choose to break prison rules once they are incarcerated.

- Offering deserving, nonviolent offenders the opportunity to earn early release through their participation in academic, vocational, drug treatment and work programs – while demanding that they maintain acceptable behavior records in prison and refrain from filing frivilous lawsuits.

The Governor's budget also projects there will be 700 "state readies" awaiting transfer from the counties in April 2004, down from 1,629 in April 2000.



A-1 Drug Merit Time is expected to allow up to 75 such offenders to earn one-third off their minimum sentence, compared to one-sixth under the existing Merit Time law for all other Merit-eligible offenders.

To qualify, inmates must meet the existing criteria for good institutional records and program accomplishments. These offenders have been in prison for many years. This statute will require that they must have spent those years maintaining good behavior records while refraining from filing frivilous lawsuits.

The decline in "state readies" is significant, from a high of 4,425 in July 1999. It is a form of "mandate relief" for counties – they no longer bear the cost of housing thousands of offenders ready to enter state prison when we have the room to accept them. Now we have the beds to take them much more quickly.

Governor details new programmatic initiatives

Governor Pataki's initiatives are based upon a projection that the inmate population will decline by about 1,900 inmates.

As the inmate population declines, we anticipate losing 416 positions by attrition, including 334 in Security, 72 in Programs and 10 in Support.

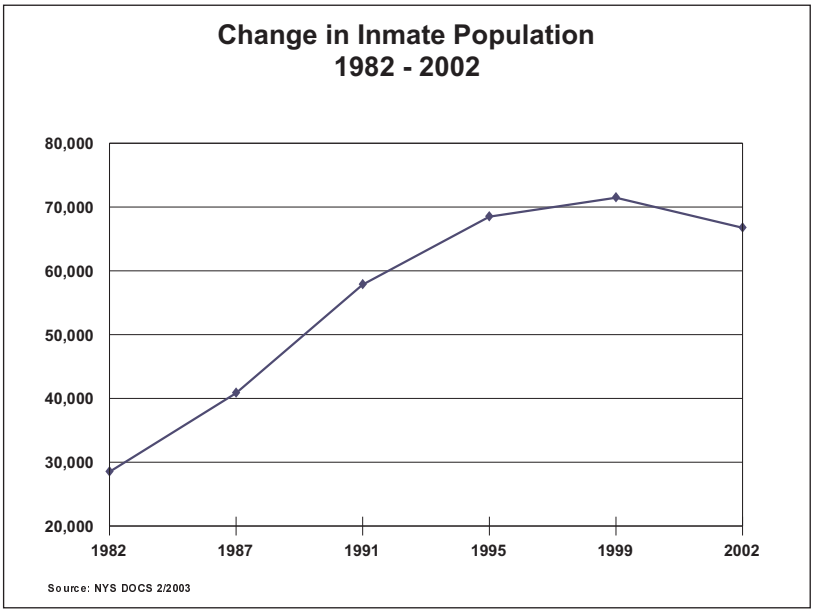
The inmate reduction will also mean a lower census in the Regional Medical Units (RMUs) at Fishkill and Bedford Hills. That will result in a combined reduction of Health Services and 10 Security items, again by attrition, at these two units.

Central Office will also lose 36 positions by attrition. That comes on top of a 10 percent reduction in Central Office staffing since Governor Pataki took office. Central Office should take the lead in these cuts: it should and will absorb its share of the cuts as the inmate population declines.

The budget also includes these three new initiatives that will contribute to downsizing the population:

The *Expanded Earned Eligibility Program (EEP)* will initially allow for the parole of 40 inmates within eight years of release, compared to the current maximum of six years to release.

EEP requires offenders to participate in assigned programs while maintaining positive institutional behavior records.



The *Presumptive Release Program* is expected to account for approximately 1,150 additional releases.

It is applicable to inmates who are not presently incarcerated for a statutorily defined violent felony, an A-1 offense, a sex or homicide offense, and who have no prior convictions for these crimes. To qualify, inmates will have to fulfill all program requirements and maintain positive behavior records.

Inmates who meet the criteria will be automatically released by DOCS when they reach their parole eligibility or merit eligibility date.

The cost of Correctional Services

The "bottom line" is a reduction in staffing resources through normal attrition, combined with related non-personal services reductions based on a lesser number of inmates. That will result in a net reduction of approximately $20 million in the Department's General Fund. That will in turn provide the Department with a total of $1.78 billion in operational funds for the next fiscal year.

These are reductions that will occur by attrition as the population declines. Therefore, I believe this is a reasoned and workable plan.

Even with that said, every employee should be constantly alert to ensure that we are only spending funds on the necessities of our operation.

We must think twice about every expenditure to make certain we are spending taxpayer dollars in the most efficient and effective manner.

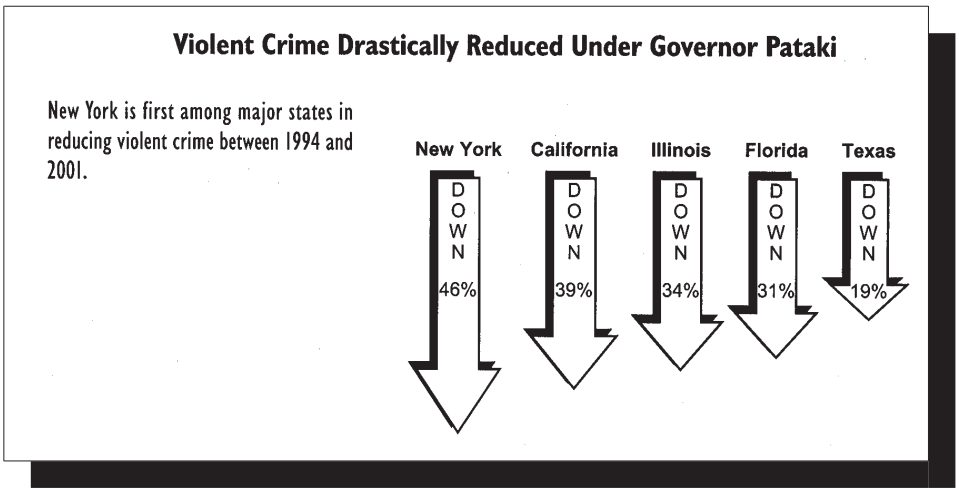
Our state's fiscal constraints demands that of all state employees. I know I can expect that diligence from all of you.

Governor's budget plan assures public's protection

Continues initiatives that have reduced crime while cutting spending, rejecting new taxes

No state in the nation is doing more than New York to protect its citizens and combat the threat of terrorism.

Since September 11th, Governor Pataki has bolstered security to protect potential targets and new communications technology has been deployed.



To protect New Yorkers in the post-9/11 environment, the Executive Budget he proposed in January includes $180 million for public security activities, an increase of 7 percent over 2002-03. This includes nearly $8 million in new funds to support an additional 120 state troopers to protect and bolster security along New York's northern border.

The Office of Public Security will continue to coordinate and expand these anti-terrorism efforts throughout the state. A new unit – known as the Office of Cyber Security and Critical Infrastructure Coordination – has also been established to protect the state's cyber assets and ensure that those assets are utilized effectively in disaster preparedness efforts. The Governor also recently established a new position – the state Director of Disaster Preparedness and Response – to lead the state's efforts to respond to and recover from disasters, terrorist acts and other emergencies.

The budget also includes a new Homeland Security Identification Program, which will strengthen the validity and security of all original-issued state drivers' licenses and non-driver identification cards. This program would be funded by an increase in the photo document fee charged upon issuance or renewal of all licenses and non-driver ID cards.

Governor Pataki's criminal justice initiatives have resulted in an unprecedented reduction in crime in New York during the past eight years – violent crime is down 46 percent and major categories of crime have dropped by more than half. To continue this record of success, the budget includes $3 billion to support criminal justice activities.

The budget continues support for initiatives that provide law enforcement officials with the most up-to-date tools, including:

- $11.8 million to collect DNA from felons and file samples in the state's DNA databank;
- $8.8 million for development of a new Statewide Wireless Network that will enable public safety agencies at all levels to better communicate, and
- $4 million for the "Gun DNA" Ballistic Identification Databank.

To ensure sufficient resources are available to maintain the state's investment in key law enforcement and related public protection activities, a number of revenue measures are proposed, including an increase in the vehicle insurance and criminal history record fees. These new revenues would support public security measures at the Division of State Police and other criminal justice services, such as fingerprint operations and statewide law enforcement information systems, that are being enhanced despite the state's fiscal difficulties.

Finally, the budget initiates a multi-year reform of the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) juvenile justice program designed to lower recidivism among juvenile delinquents while reducing the number of state-operated youth facility beds. The budget provides $3.3 million for a new community-based intensive supervision program for non-violent youths that would enable OCFS to reduce the number of state-operated beds by 250.

Preparing to meet future challenges

The new economic and fiscal factors arising over the course of recent months have exacerbated the state's fiscal situation for the current year, as well as for next year. It is now anticipated that New York will face an additional General Fund shortfall of $2.2 billion in the current 2002-03 fiscal year and a gap of $9.3 billion for 2003-04 – a combined $11.5 billion shortfall that is larger than the budgets of 36 other states. The Executive Budget addresses this shortfall by following the same fiscally responsible budgeting practices the state has utilized since 1995.

Virtually the entire 2002-03 shortfall is associated with lower-than-expected revenues attributable to the combined impact on New York's economy of 9/11 and the national recession. Actions proposed to address the projected $2.2 billion current year imbalance include:

- Achieving nearly $700 million in savings by reducing agency spending, achieving additional work force reductions through the hiring freeze and more aggressive use of the retirement incentive program, lowering debt costs by taking advantage of favorable interest rates, securing additional federal reimbursement for certain costs; and
- Utilizing $1.5 billion from securitizing a portion of the state's share of the national tobacco settlement.

Governor presents spending plan with his Budget Director, Carole Stone.

The $9.3 billion 2003-04 shortfall is a result of $4.6 billion in baseline increases largely prescribed by current statutory requirements; $3.1 billion in continued revenue losses, and $1.6 billion from the loss of rainy day reserves used in 2002-03.

To address this imbalance, the Executive Budget proposes a comprehensive series of actions that maintain critical services, bolster the state's fiscal strength and restore budget balance.

These actions include a balanced combination of recurring spending reductions, initiatives to increase revenues and the use of other available resources to achieve balance in a way that is not destructive to essential services. Actions include:

- $1 billion from state agency operations, programs and projects that are being streamlined or eliminated to achieve savings, including new workforce reductions;
- $600 million from actions that allow certain welfare costs to be supported by federal aid;
- $520 million in lower debt costs by taking advantage of record-low interest rates;
- $1 billion in cost-saving measures in Medicaid and other health care programs;
- $1.2 billion in fiscal year actions that result in a school year decline of $1.24 billion in school aid. (Even after these measures are implemented, school aid will have increased by $3.6 billion since 1994-95 and by significantly more than inflation during this period);
- $580 million in higher education savings, including TAP reforms that encourage students to complete their degrees and use of federal funds to support TAP;
- $2.3 billion in tobacco securitization funds, which are available to help close the gap;
- $1.4 billion from new revenue measures that will produce new sources of recurring revenue, while avoiding actions that harm the economy or job-creation efforts, and
- $700 million in savings from various local aid, employee health care and other programs.

Continued tax cuts key to budget proposal

In Governor Pataki's 2003-04 Executive Budget address, he urged the state Legislature to maintain New York's role as the nation's tax cut leader by preserving existing tax cuts and avoiding the imposition of new job-killing tax increases.

Since 1995, Governor Pataki and the Legislature have cut taxes 63 different times. The Executive Budget will continue all of the tax cuts that have been enacted since 1995, including all of the tax cuts that are scheduled to phase-in during 2003-04.

In total, New Yorkers will pay $13.5 billion less in taxes in the upcoming fiscal year than they would have paid if the Governor's tax cuts were not in place. The new Executive Budget places New Yorkers on track to receive more than $1.2 billion in additional tax savings over the next three years. By 2005-06, the cumulative value of all tax cuts made since 1995 will reach more than $107 billion.

In 2003-04, New Yorkers will realize more than $177 million in additional savings resulting from the implementation of previously enacted tax cuts, including:

- Expansion of the EITC to 30 percent of the federal credit – meaning an additional 20,000 lower-income New Yorkers will now pay no state income tax at all;
- An increase in the College Tuition Tax Deduction and Credit;
- Continued reduction in the personal income tax "marriage penalty;"
- An Alternative Energy Fuel Cell Tax Credit;
- Continued phase-out of the Gross Receipts Tax on energy;
- A 10 percent reduction in the small business tax rate;
- A tax reduction for securities and commodities brokers;
- An increase in the "Green" Buildings Tax Credit, and
- A reduction in the beer tax.

The budget also includes the following targeted tax cuts:

- High-Tech Expansion of the Certified Capital Company (CAPCO) program to provide a new state tax incentive to leverage up to $250 million in new venture capital investments for small and emerging businesses connected to the Governor's highly-successful Centers of Excellence program and other state-supported research facilities. This measure would authorize $125 million of additional CAPCO tax credits that are expected to leverage up to $250 million of new venture capital investments targeted to small businesses affiliated with certain state supported research and development centers.

- A new Historic Home Ownership Rehabilitation Tax Credit that would be targeted to every Empire Zone and to other areas across the state which are in need of revitalization. This new measure would provide a personal income tax credit for a portion of qualified rehabilitation expenditures made by a taxpayer to rehabilitate or purchase a historic home. The credit would be effective in 2004 and save taxpayers $10 million annually.

The budget also includes provisions that would close certain tax loopholes and transform existing tax incentives to make them more affordable and effective. These measures include:

- Closing a loophole that allows certain businesses to deduct up to $24,000 when they purchase very large SUVs – a benefit that was originally intended to help farmers purchase equipment but has been taken advantage of by certain taxpayers;
- Changing the insurance tax to a 2 percent tax on premiums – the same as 37 other states;
- Converting the clothing/footwear sales tax exemption to four, one-week exemption periods for clothing/footwear costing less than $500 to make the cut more effective; and
- Reforming the Empire Zone program to allow for prospective local cost-sharing of the costs for the real property tax credit component of the program.

Even during a year of significant fiscal constraints, the Executive Budget will fully preserve and protect the STAR program for seniors – a program that has entirely eliminated school taxes for nearly 200,000 seniors.

The budget does include a proposal to cap STAR benefits for non-senior homeowners at their 2002-2003 levels, but for one year only. As a result, the average STAR savings for most homeowners would remain the same, while seniors qualifying for the enhanced STAR benefit would not be affected.

Under the proposal, new homeowners would still be eligible for STAR benefits, but existing benefits to current non-senior STAR recipients would not increase in 2003-04, with growth in STAR benefits resuming in 2004-2005. Annual STAR savings will reach $2.7 billion in 2003-04. Homeowner savings under the program will average approximately $1,000 for income eligible seniors and more than $600 for all other homeowners.

Fiscal crisis requires education cuts

"Clearly, the most difficult decisions facing us involve education – an area where we have worked together to make record investments," Governor Pataki said. "As someone who was educated in New York's public schools – and as a father whose children have benefitted greatly from our excellent public school system – the last thing I want to do is reduce spending on education. However, the crisis is that bad. We have no choice."

Under the leadership of Governor Pataki, New York has made historic investments in our public schools, providing record school aid increases of more than $4.8 billion, or nearly 50 percent since 1995. These additional state funds helped bring New York's total school spending to the highest in the nation – more than $11,400 per pupil in 2001-02, compared to the national average of nearly $7,900.

Unfortunately, the state's current fiscal realities have undermined our ability to sustain the current level of investment in education. While avoiding mid-year cuts in school aid, the Executive Budget proposes a reduction in funding of $1.24 billion, or 8.5 percent, for the school year beginning July 1, 2003.

Although it was not possible to spare schools from funding reductions required of virtually all state programs, New York's schools will benefit from overall spending levels that would continue to place the state among the top states in the nation. New York remains well above other major states, such as California, Texas and Florida. Furthermore, since 1994-95, state support for schools has grown at a rate nearly one-and-a-half times the rate of inflation, even with the proposed 2003-04 reduction.

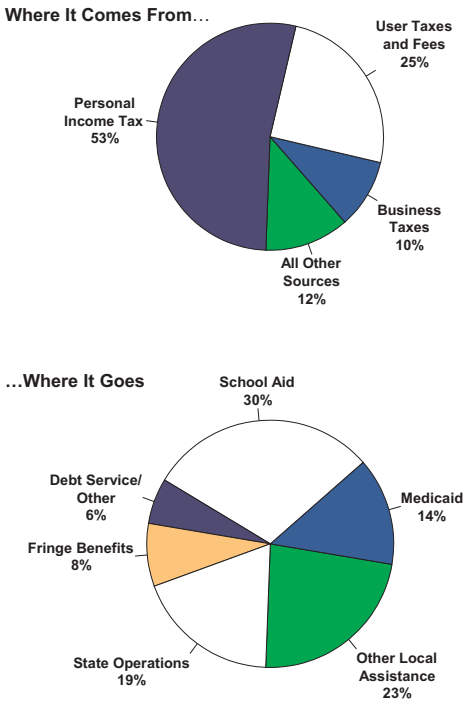
This school aid reduction includes an expense-based decline of $144 million in building aid and an enrollment-based decline of $15 million in growth aid – neither of which represent aid losses for school districts.

These aid declines, coupled with a reduction in discretionary grant programs, generate savings of $607 million – or nearly one-half of the proposed overall school aid reduction of $1.24 billion.

The school aid proposal also recommends reforms in BOCES and special education. Two years ago, Governor Pataki proposed sweeping reforms to the way the state allocates aid to public schools. The Governor's proposal – known as Flex Aid – would provide schools with greater flexibility to meet locally defined needs. The Governor's school aid proposal for 2003-04 sustains the basic principles of Flex Aid, including:

- Consolidating nine existing aid categories into one simplified funding stream;
- Allocating operating aid in a way sensitive to districts' relative wealth/student needs, and

2003-04 General Fund Tax Dollar



The General Fund, expected to total $38 billion in the coming year, draws the most public interest. It represents the taxes paid by individuals and businesses as well as user fees. The Executive Budget totals $91 billion, including other resources such as federal aid and lottery income that will, among other things, pay for debt service and capital costs.

- Providing schools with the maximum flexibility in the use of consolidated operating aid.

Additional reforms being proposed for the coming year include the inception of a school evaluation services initiative to promote improved student achievement and accountability of our public schools. This program would allow local school officials to evaluate the relative cost-effectiveness of their educational and administrative programs by reviewing data that clearly display the "return on resources" among comparable school districts. Similar programs have already been initiated in Michigan and Pennsylvania and have proven to be a success.

Governor Pataki details spending plan.

Meeting health care needs

Since 1995, New York has made great strides to implement measures that strengthen and broaden the array of services and programs available to meet the health care needs of all New Yorkers. At a time when the state is facing unprecedented fiscal challenges, the budget maintains New York's commitment to providing access to high-quality, affordable health care, but also advances measures to reduce costs, maximize revenues and target the state's resources to the most critical priorities.

The budget proposes legislation that would reauthorize the Health Care Reform Act (HCRA) – currently scheduled to expire on June 30, 2003 – for an additional two years. The proposal would continue critical health care workforce recruitment and retention funding; extend authorization for Child Health Plus; stabilize HCRA revenues through increases in HCRA surcharges and the "covered lives" assessment; dedicate additional Empire Blue Cross and other conversion proceeds along with Federal WTC reimbursement funds to HCRA, and reduce various program initiatives to make HCRA affordable.

New York state taxpayers support the most expensive Medicaid program in the nation, a program that provides a generous array of services to 3.3 million recipients. In 2003-04, without any action, total Medicaid spending in New York would reach nearly $42 billion, far more than in any other state in the nation.

At the same time, no state spends more on affordable drugs for its senior citizens than New York does through its Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage (EPIC) program.

To keep health care affordable in light of the fiscal realities the state is facing, the budget includes a series of cost-savings measures that would produce state Medicaid savings totaling $1.23 billion and $38 million in the EPIC program.

These Medicaid reforms would also provide nearly $260 million in 2003-04 savings to county governments – growing to $295 million in 2004-05. The Governor will also continue to pursue legislation he proposed in 2002 that would provide counties across the state, and New York City, with a total of $172 million in new fiscal relief. The legislation would eliminate the requirement that counties repay state Medicaid funds previously advanced to them, thereby freeing up those funds for local governments.

Even after this reduction, New York state will still spend more than any other state on hospital, nursing home, outpatient and home care. For example, proposed per capita spending on Medicaid of $1,512 is more than double the national average of $688. New York would also continue to spend more than any state on making prescription drugs affordable for seniors.

Support for local governments

The 2003-04 Executive Budget builds on a strong eight-year record of providing support and assistance to local governments across New York state. The budgets enacted since 1995 have saved local governments and school districts across the state a combined total of more than $7.3 billion.

During this time, unrestricted aid to localities grew by more than 14 percent and aid to cities (excluding New York City) grew by nearly $200 million, or 90 percent. Additionally, the creation of Empire Zones and the reduction of broad-based taxes have created jobs and generated new local revenues. As a result, local property taxes have been held in check. During the seven-year period from 1995 to 2001, property taxes grew less than 1.4 percent per year, significantly below inflation.

The Governor's budget would continue to promote efficient and effective local government operations through three major policy initiatives. The budget would:

- Enact reforms that are expected to substantially reduce growth in Medicaid and Early Intervention costs for local governments;
- Preserve $792 million in unrestricted aid at 2002-03 levels for local governments; and
- Enact major mandate relief legislation that would provide savings to localities.

Under the budget, the county aid program concludes this year, as planned, after delivering $22 million in unrestricted aid to all counties (outside of New York City) for county fiscal years 2001 and 2002.

The Executive Budget has a net positive impact of more than $658 million for local governments, apart from any reduction in school aid.

Nearly $260 million in savings would accrue from Medicaid reforms in 2003-04 – growing to $295 million in 2004-05.

Staff, inmates again bring aid to needy neighbors

Projects include donations, fund-raisers to aid poor, elderly and victims of crime

As they've done so many times in the past, DOCS employees were in the true spirit of giving to their less-fortunate neighbors during the recent holiday season.

Expanding on their annual and successful Make a Difference Day (MADD) activities, employees at facilities throughout the state worked long hours helping thousands of needy people at Thanksgiving and Christmas time. They held a host of assorted fund-raisers, raffles and bake sales, donated and cooked food for the needy, conducted clothing and furniture drives and held Christmas parties, complete with Santas, throughout the state.

The grateful recipients were many: disadvantaged children, senior citizens, the hungry and homeless, the lonely, victims of domestic violence, at-risk youth, the lonely, those afflicted with grave and life-threatening illnesses and countless others.

"Our employees have always been concerned and compassionate when it comes to aiding their less-fortunate neighbors throughout the state. They once again were up to the task during the past holiday season," said Commissioner Goord. "Our staff helped make what could have been a dreary time for many a bright and cheerful time. They should be proud of their continued and generous efforts to help the needy. I'm confident they'll be there whenever their help is needed throughout the entire year, as well as during the next holiday season."

Sergeant and CERT member Edward Meyer was among the Bedford Hills staff to donate, collect and distribute toys for needy children.

Here's a sampling of how staff went out of their way to ensure that the 2002 holiday season was a joyous one for their neighbors:

Staff at Mohawk assisted the YWCA of the Mohawk Valley with money raised through various fund-raisers, 50/50 raffles and doughnut sales. The funds were used to purchase Christmas gifts for children and mothers who are victims of domestic violence. Staff also cleaned out their attics and basements and generously provided furniture, small appliances, clothing and other necessities to families who are trying to transfer from "safe houses" to their own residences. Members of the local CSEA unit also donated money to the cause as well as baby furniture, clothing, diapers, baby bottles and toiletries.

Also at Mohawk, inmates enrolled in the facility's Transitional Services and ASAT programs held a basketball game to benefit the Make-A-Wish Foundation. They wound up receiving over $1,000 in donations and all of the money was turned over to the organization's local chapter in Syracuse. The ASAT team won the game, which attracted more than 300 spectators, 82 to 78.

Inmates at Lakeview once again spent the entire year repairing broken toys for holiday distribution to needy children throughout western New York. This program of giving was singlehandedly spearheaded in 1965 by a then-young state trooper, Jack Miller, who since has retired but still runs the program. More than 35,000 toys with a market value of more than $750,000 were repaired and delivered to needy children last year.

Also at Lakeview, inmates assembled more than 300 luminaries for the American Cancer Society to sell to the public in honor of loved ones who have battled cancer. A luminary is a small lunch bag that is filled with sand or kitty litter to weigh it down. A small candle is then placed inside and lit, making the bag glow. People typically place the luminaries on their sidewalks, walkways and driveways during the holidays.

Staff at Central Office teamed up with employees at the state Department of Taxation & Finance to provide a big lift for disadvantaged children in the Albany area. Tax employees have a Christmas tree set up in their lobby each year with the names of children at the Parson's Orphanage and their holiday gift wishes. For the third straight year, Central Office staff plucked names from the tree and fulfilled the wishes of the children. A total of 60 children were "adopted" this year as part of the program. Central Office staff also conducted a toy campaign to benefit the Toys for Tots program.

Employees at Camp Pharsalia set up a collection box in the facility lobby for new toys to be distributed to needy children as determined by Catholic Charities. They were given to children in Chenango County. This has become an annual event at Camp Pharsalia as employees feel that no child should be deprived of at least one nice gift during the holiday season.

At the request of local officials, vocational shop inmates at Riverview carved a variety of nearly life-sized figures, which they later painted in vibrant colors, to replace the aged and faded Nativity scene that for years has graced the grounds of the village of Gouverneur Park during the holidays. Inmates

Showing the nativity scene figurines they carved for display in the village of Gouverneur are (from left) Riverview inmates Ronald Prevorse, Juan Ramos, Edward Toledo, Pedro Ramos, Calvin Washington, Rashon Harrison, Wong Hon, Jose Ortiz, Miguel Gomez and Gerard Blasich.

carved a total of 12 different Nativity figures, including Madonna and child, a camel, angels and sheep.

Village Administrator Karen Lancto, in a letter to Riverview Superintendent Ekpe Ekpe, indicated that the work performed by the Riverview inmates "is a work of art that one would think had been painted by a professional. We feel very fortunate that you had so much talent available, instructionally and artistically, for this worthy project. The village of Gouverneur will be able to enjoy this beautiful work of art for many years to come, thanks to the cooperation and effort of the Riverview Correctional Facility."

Staff and inmates at Washington continued their annual tradition of helping area senior citizens save money during the winter season. One Officer and a community service crew consisting of 10 inmates cut two cords of wood for each of the 30 needy elderly residents who had been identified by the Washington County Office of the Aged. The supervised crew then delivered, unloaded and stacked the wood at the individual targeted residences. This project substantially reduces home heating costs.

Staff at Albion held a new toy drive to benefit needy children in Orleans County. They set up huge boxes in the main lobby and donated proceeds to Orleans County Community Action, Inc. The local PEF chapter also pitched in with a $75 donation to that organization.

Project Joy made its way back to Albion this past holiday season. It's an event that's been going on for 22 years and was once again a rousing success. Fifty community volunteers visited the facility to conduct a variety of workshops aimed at educating the inmates and providing them with the tools, contacts and resources to succeed on the outside. More than 1,000 inmates attended the event.

Bare Hill, Franklin and Upstate employees teamed up to assist the Centenary United Methodist Church prepare its annual Thanksgiving Day dinner for the area's needy. Dinner was served to more than 100 guests at the church and meals were delivered to about 250 homebound people. Franklin staff cooked 22 turkeys and prepared the bread stuffing, Bare Hill staff peeled and cooked 250 pounds of potatoes and prepared 12 gallons of turkey gravy while Upstate staff cooked about 65 squash.

Bare Hill employees also helped 130 needy area children get Christmas gifts in conjunction with the Wish-Tree Program that is coordinated by the Franklin County Department of Social Services. County officials gave the facility a list of what each child wanted, with gender and sizes, and employees went out and purchased the specific items. The gifts were then taken by Bare Hill volunteers to the Department of Social Services for distribution during the holidays.

Wende staff collected gifts for needy children that were distributed through Parents Anonymous. Among those working on the project were (from left) Counselor Deborah Watkins, Patricia Dixon of Parents Anonymous, Electronic Equipment Technician Vincent Swaydis and CO Joyce Shamburger.

The Iris Hill Children's Center benefitted from the work of Bedford Hills staff, including (from left) COs and CERT members Jorge Coreano, Tonya Kirkland and Michelle Wyman.

Franklin employees also participated in the Holiday Helpers Program. This is a program that services needy, working families that are not receiving any sort of help from any other source. Each participating employee was given a child's age, gender and special wishes for the holidays. Thanks to the generosity of Franklin employees, a total of 34 needy area children had their Christmas wishes come true and were provided with special holiday dinners to enjoy with their families.

Franklin's Diversity Management Committee donated $100 to augment the efforts of staff who gave of their time and money to ensure that the effort would be a success.

Staff at Cape Vincent baked literally hundreds of Christmas cookies for senior citizens serviced by the Meals-on-Wheels program that operates out of the Paynter Senior Center in Clayton. Seventy-five bags of six or more cookies were packaged and marked by female volunteers from the Business Office. In addition to the regular Christmas cookies, sugar-free cookies also were baked for those seniors who are on diabetic diets. There were enough cookies left over to make up platters for seniors eating at the Paynter Center.

CERT members at Bedford Hills collected new toys for needy children from their coworkers and coordinated a community-wide Toys for Tots campaign as well. Employees then wrapped the toys and delivered them to needy children at a local children's center.

Employees at Chateaugay joined forces with Girl Scout Troop 114 to collect toys for needy area children. The items were donated to the Bread of Life Food Pantry, which serves more than 450 needy North Country families. To show their appreciation for their charitable efforts, Chateaugay employees invited the girl scouts to the facility to enjoy some milk, cookies and other goodies.

Eastern's Inmate Liaison Committee raised $1,500 to buy gifts for children.

Eastern staff participated in a gift-giving project coordinated through the Ellenville Methodist Church. Church contacts provided information on the Angel Tree Christmas Program, an organized annual event of gift giving to needy local children whose mothers or fathers are incarcerated. The church gave Eastern eight "angels" with pertinent details to include the age of the child, first name, size and Christmas wish. Every child was given one practical gift such as clothing and one toy. Gift totals were limited to $20. Business Office staff did all the shopping, wrapping and tagging; the presents then were taken to the church and delivered to the children. Eastern's Inmate Liaison Committee (ILC) also raised $1,500 from the inmate population to buy gifts for those children who would be visiting their fathers at the facility during the holidays.

Coxsackie's Make a Difference Day Committee organized a toy drive to benefit the Secret Santa Committee at the Coxsackie-Athens Central School. Employees from the facility donated more than 50 new toys and 30 books. PEF also donated $100 to purchase gifts. The Secret Santa Committee has been bringing holiday joy to needy area children for the past 18 years and Coxsackie employees say they are proud to now be a part of this worthy annual venture.

Wallkill employees sponsored a baked ziti and meatball luncheon to benefit the Special Olympics. They wound up donating $800. Wallkill employees also donated dozens of holiday gifts for children and their mothers who are housed at an area shelter for victims of domestic violence.

Five Points employees maintained the holiday spirit by contributing time, money and gifts for 50 children adopted from the Seneca County Christmas Project. The names of the 50 children were placed on a Christmas tree inside the facility and, within 24 hours, all of the children had been "adopted" by staff. Those employees who did not adopt a child pitched in as well, bringing in toys, clothes and other items for their coworkers who had adopted a child.

The staff at Five Points also donated a Thanksgiving meal, complete with all the fixings, to a needy local family. The food was delivered to the family, which wished to remain anonymous, by a local charitable group, the House of Concern. Officials with the charity relayed back to facility staff a deep and heartfelt thank you from the appreciative family of six. Additionally, Five Points employees helped out needy children in the local

South Seneca School District by donating winter coats, boots, hats and gloves and other needed winter items.

As they've done on past Thanksgivings, off-duty staff at Ulster prepared and delivered to the facility full Thanksgiving meals for their coworkers who had to be on the job that day.

Great Meadow employees held their annual Adopt-a-Family Christmas Party for foster children in Washington County, their families and foster care workers at the facility's QWL Building. The event was once again spearheaded by Committee Chairman Correction Officer Ralph Reynolds and a team of 30 dedicated and spirited Great Meadow volunteers. The committee raised funds for the event throughout the year through raffles, bake and lunch sales and other assorted fund-raisers. Always-popular mascot "Froggy" from Glens Falls radio station WFFG and various clowns and elves were on hand to entertain the children. The appreciative children and their families were fed, had their faces painted, received presents and had their pictures taken with Santa.

Albion employees load for distribution the toys and other gifts donated by their coworkers. From left are Counselor Karen Spiotta, Teacher Mark Zimmermann and Librarian Gene Veress.

Employees at Wende delivered Christmas gifts to the Joan A. Male Family Support Center. The center works in conjunction with Parents Anonymous to provide holiday gifts to underprivileged children in the area. Gift tags with the names of the needy children, their gender, ages and wishes were chosen by Wende staff. The gifts were then purchased and delivered to officials at the support center for distribution to the needy.

Employees at Monterey spread holiday cheer by adopting two needy families in the area, one from Schuyler County and one from Steuben County. The facility has participated in this worthwhile program for the past three years. Employees were able to raise a total of $1,000 to buy gifts for both families. They also provided each needy family with 120 pounds of food. The recipient families were selected by the Schuyler Outreach Program and the Women's Center of the Southern Tier, Inc.

Coxsackie staff donations are loaded for distribution by (from left) Vocational Supervisor Lina Melino-Antolick, CO Robert Muir and Counselor Chris Levine.

Mid-State employees helped make the holiday season a cheerful one for residents at the nearby Presbyterian Nursing Home. Over 30 residents gave employees a "wish list" of two gifts that they would like to receive for Christmas. Since so many employees wanted to participate in the drive, they wound up substantially expanding the gift wish list to include generic items such as socks, knee highs and boxes of chocolate. Ten staff members, including a jolly old Santa Claus (aka Vocational Instructor William Hamelin), delivered the gifts to the residents. The seniors were very pleased to receive the gifts and were happy that they shared some company and good conversation.

At Altona and Clinton, staff and inmates once again teamed up to benefit the Clinton County Christmas Bureau project. For many years now the inmates have constructed doll cradles, toy trucks, rocking horses, tables and chairs, doll high chairs, doll carriages, toy wagons and many other assorted toys for distribution to the area's indigent children.

Green Haven employees "adopted" four needy families as part of its annual "Make a Child Smile" program and took the families on a shopping spree at a local Wal-Mart store. The employees raised more than $7,000 from donations and various fund-raisers. Money that wasn't spent on the families was donated to help pay for additional playground equipment for Beekman Elementary School.

The program began four years ago with a small toy drive, said CO Jeff Erns, who started the program with fellow Officer Cyndi Martin.

The focus was to go beyond the prison walls and reach out to the community.

"When you see Green Haven, you see it from the outside. You don't see the people inside, and we have a big heart," Erns said.

Inmate population reflects 'right-sizing'

Orleans

Built on a sprawling tract of 45 acres of land adjacent to the Albion prison for females near the Erie Canal in Albion, Orleans was opened as a 542-bed medium-security facility for male inmates in December 1984. Prior to the opening, a staff of five civilian employees reported to work at Albion to be paid out of a payroll labeled "Albion II." Eventually they set up shop in a large warehouse in nearby Medina where they ordered supplies and equipment, receipting the inventory and ensuring that the facility would be ready to receive its first scheduled draft of inmates. Of these original five employees, one, John Gurney, continues to work in the Maintenance Department. Orleans currently has about 480 employees, about 75 of whom have been there since the facility opened. Talk about stability over the decades ...

Dedicated, professional employees are indeed the fuel that powers Orleans, a facility that has carved a unique and groundbreaking niche in the Department's storied annals. In 1985, Sally Johnson was named to the top spot at this facility, which made her the first and only female Superintendent at a male prison in New York state at that time. She served admirably in that position for the ensuing 16 years, retiring three years ago.

On October 24, 1985, in an effort to reach out to its new and curious neighbors, Ms. Johnson scheduled an open house for people from throughout the local community. Over 600 inquisitive visitors were given guided tours of the facility by security and civilian staff alike. They were afforded numerous question-and-answer sessions so they, too, could get to better know their new neighbors. And it's been a mutually beneficial arrangement that continues to blossom on a daily basis.

Changing censuses to meet changing needs

Orleans was one of many so-called "cookie-cutter" facilities constructed by the Department in the 1980's to handle an almost overwhelming influx of inmates who were being sent to prison because of the crack epidemic that had not only gripped New York state but the entire nation. These prototype facilities went up quickly and thus let the Department meet its capacity

needs in a timely fashion, translating to enhanced security for all. The original design was for 11 buildings with only one, the Administration Building, located outside the double-fenced secured perimeter.

Over its 19-year history Orleans' housing capacity has changed many times. Six months after its opening, plans for expanding the capacity of the facility by 200 beds were discussed and, due to the urgent need for more bed space, approved in short order.

The expansion took place in 1986 with two more dormitory-style housing units being constructed. Each was capable of housing 100 inmates, bringing the capacity of the facility to 742. The following year, a housing unit was converted to a work release unit with the addition of 20 bunk beds. The general confinement dorms were increased to 54 beds each, bringing the capacity to 814.

Student Nurse Sandy Lucas checks blood pressure for Orleans Capt. Paul Chappius during 2001's Great American Smoke Out.

Due to an inmate housing shortage in 1989, 200 bunk beds were temporarily placed in the facility's gymnasium and in gyms at several other medium-security facilities through the state. The gyms were large air-supported structures known throughout the system as "bubbles." They were erected to provide for various indoor recreational activities. Those additional beds increased Orleans' capacity to 1,014.

In March of 1990, the inmates were moved out of the gym and into double-bunked, general confinement dorms. There were now 13 double-bunked dorms each with a 90-bed capacity and 30 double-bunked work release beds. That raised the capacity of the facility to 1,312. In 1991 double bunks were phased out over a six-month period with the exception of bunks in the work release unit, and the capacity dropped to 844.

That significant reduction in capacity was short lived. The facility was once again double bunked in December 1991 and the population returned to 1,312. The work release unit was converted back to a general confinement unit in June 1992 and the work release inmates were transferred to a nearby community-based work release facility, resulting in a net loss of 10 beds.

The population remained relatively stable until April 1998. That's when one of the nine "S-Blocks" went up on the grounds, increasing the capacity of the facility to 1,502. These 100-cell, double-bunked maximum-security units are designed to segregate from the general population those inmates in the region who chose to assault staff and others and disobey prison rules. The result has been much safer prisons throughout the state.

Mirroring that trend, Orleans is indeed a much safer prison today than it was several years ago. Orleans has seen a 63 percent decline in the number of all unusual incidents since 1997, down from 132 to 42 last year. The number of inmate-on-staff assaults dropped by 67 percent between 1996 and 2002, falling from 12 to just three last year. There has never been an escape from within the secure perimeter.

The population stabilized until the fall of 2000 when the Department began to "right-size" its population due to a population decline. It began vacating double bunks throughout the state. That enhanced security by not only lowering the number of inmates in each dorm, but also by improving Officer's sight lines to monitor inmate activity. The current population of some 1,211 at Orleans is projected to decrease until it reaches its targeted capacity of 1,082.

The complex has grown from the original 11 buildings to the current 33 buildings, 28 of which are in the secure perimeter. Of the seven general confinement housing units, five are identical, one has cooking facilities (for the Honor Dorm inmates, which provides a valuable incentive for inmates not to act up) and one has had minor modifications to accommodate the physically disabled and wheelchair-bound inmates. The most recent addition to the facility complex is a perimeter yard tower which was opened in March 2001.

Orleans inmates erect pole barn in Batavia as a community service project.

Meeting daily needs of a diverse population

Orleans was accredited in 1987 by the American Correctional Association, affirming that it meets nationally-acceptable standards in its management and operations. It was the ninth of the state's 70 prisons to be accredited and has been accredited triennially since then.

Orleans offers a full range of academic education, vocational training, alcohol and substance

abuse treatment programming, counseling services and volunteer services programming. It also goes to great lengths to help ensure that inmates maintain strong family ties, a vital component when it comes to the success of an inmate upon their eventual reintegration into the community.

In that regard, a Visitor's Center designed to serve the families of inmates housed at Orleans and Albion was built and serviced its first visitors on October 3, 1987. It was the first of a new group of 12 such centers constructed by the Department at the time. The building was constructed by vocational inmates at Mid-Orange, transported to Orleans on a truck and placed on a concrete foundation. The center provides hospitality and a place to wait for those who are visiting inmates at Orleans or Albion. Many visitors have to travel hundreds of miles to get to western New York and at the end of their journey they need to "freshen up" and regroup before entering the facility for their visit. The center provides toast, coffee, cereal, fruit, baked goods and beverages to the visitors. Donations from the ILC and other inmate organizations pay for the food and beverages. A dressing room and rest rooms also are made available.

Ex-Buffalo Bills quarterback Jim Kelly, the only player to take his team to four consecutive Super Bowls, helps Orleans with its SEFA campaign.

At Orleans and elsewhere throughout the prison system, children are a primary focus of staff and community volunteers. An area with child-sized tables and chairs is designed for story reading, coloring and game playing. Many times just having a caring adult around to listen or interact with the children is what they need the most. Thus, the Child Enrichment Program (CEP) was taken one step further. The program began with community volunteers spending two hours each Saturday and Sunday with the children. Today there is also continual coverage by specially screened and trained inmates. These inmates are required to attend a course in child development as well as attend workshops where they discuss how to apply the teaching and listening skill techniques that they have learned to actual circumstances.

The center also provides educational material concerning health issues such as HIV/AIDS, drug and alcohol abuse, tuberculosis and hepatitis.

Orleans also offers a variety of services to assist inmates through its well-crafted Transitional Services Program.

Phase I of the comprehensive initiative is an orientation phase with incoming inmates placed in an initial two-week program. This phase gives the inmates an overview of the Department as well as a thorough, facility-specific orientation. They know from the start what will be expected of them and what types of behavior and other issues will not be tolerated. This is a mandatory program for all inmates.

The concept behind Phase II is a program to provide inmates with the skills and tools that they will need to become productive, law-abiding citizens upon their eventual release from prison. Phase II is unique in that it combines many counseling techniques while fulfilling specific learning objectives in an academic setting.

An inmate child care volunteer spends time with a young visitor in the children's area so that parents can spend time together.

Many hours went into the research and development of the materials necessary to craft Phase II. The end result is a 320-hour program supervised and taught by staff representing a wide range of disciplines; peer counselors also provide assistance as needed. The peer counselors are considered a vital cog in the ongoing success of the program in that they have a unique rapport with their fellow inmates.

In its continuing mission to provide the inmates with the knowledge and skills that they need so they can succeed upon release, Orleans has a variety of vocational shops that augment its varied educational, substance abuse treatment, counseling and other offerings.

Among the vocational training offered to Orleans inmates are air conditioning and refrigeration, building maintenance, commercial arts, custodial maintenance, electrical trades, floor covering, general business, print shop, small engine repair and welding.

Employees reach out while the community reaches in

The relationship between Orleans and the local community has long been a strong and mutually beneficial one that assists not only staff and local municipalities and the needy, but the inmate population as well.

Volunteer Services is an integral part of the programming menu at Orleans. The volunteers compliment prison programs and offer a diversity of programs not provided by Orleans staff. There are approximately 25 programs which are overseen and run by about 185 community volunteers.

The programs are set up to meet the needs of the majority of the inmate population and a number of the programs are religious in nature. They vary from Spanish Bible Study to "Fully Alive" and "Prison Fellowship." Other programs, like AA and NA meetings, are sponsored through the Guidance Department with the help of volunteers from the community who relay their personal struggles and triumphs with the inmates.

Staff at Orleans recognize the necessity for outside volunteers and is very proactive in expanding existing programs and establishing new ones to meet the varied needs of a diverse and ever-changing inmate population. Each program has a staff contact person to assist in developing and improving volunteer programs.

Every year the community volunteers are honored with an annual Volunteer Recognition Banquet. The highlight of the program is the awarding of the Superintendent's Cup to the Volunteer of the Year.

Just as dedicated community members are an important part of the operation at Orleans, staff at the facility have long been a vital and productive part of the local community. As with employees at other facilities, Orleans employees are key figures in the community. They work as volunteer firefighters and sports coaches, serve on school, town and other local community boards and selflessly donate their time for the needy in the community.

CO Douglas Granger supervises an inmate crew putting up paneling in an Orleans office.

Clearing hydrants of snow in a common task for Orleans inmates this time of year.

Every year, for instance, staff at Orleans and other facilities throughout the state participate in Make a Difference Day (MADD) activities to assist the needy in communities throughout New York state. In 2002, Orleans staff delivered 30 board games purchased with the proceeds from various fund-raisers to the Society for the Protection and Care of Children. Staff also made donations of cash, needed supplies and equipment to 10 organizations in surrounding communities including Hospice, the local chapter of the ARC, the Office for the Aging and an ASPCA organization. Inmate organizations, including the United Men's Organization, also donated funds to various area community agencies.

Inmates are also an integral part of the local fabric via supervised community service crews. Program assignments include outdoor work assignments on behalf of local governments and non-profit groups. Projects include snow and debris removal, church repairs and fighting floods, ice storms and forest fires.

Since 1995, Orleans crews have logged 121,100 work hours with more than 29,100 hours of security supervision. If not for DOCS, many of those projects would not otherwise be completed.

Stringers

Listed below are the individuals designated as "stringers" — employees who have volunteered to be your contact with DOCS/TODAY.

Adirondack
William S. Burke
Program Dep

Albion
Michael Morse
Program Dep

Altona
Lawrence Stearns
Program Dep

Arthur Kill
Valerie Sullivan
Program Dep

Attica
Ronald Pikula
Lieutenant

Auburn
Debbie Clinch
Industries

Bare Hill
Lynne Kelley
Senior M&S Clerk

Bayview
Tracy O'Bryan
Steward

Beacon
David Michael
Lieutenant

Bedford Hills
Joe Greenfield
Correction Counselor

Buffalo
Sandy Janes
Head Account Clerk

Butler
Brian O'Hora
ASAT PA

Cape Vincent
Donna Pirie
Administration Dep

Cayuga
Mary Regan
Volunteer Services

Central Office
Mike Houston
Public Relations

Chateaugay
William Spellman
Asst. Program Dep.

Facility Highlights

Parenting program extends to Albion

Successful for years among males, program now serves female inmates

A parenting skills program that over the years has benefitted incarcerated fathers at Sing Sing, Woodbourne and Shawangunk is now doing the same for incarcerated mothers at Albion.

The new Family Ties Parenting Skills class, which is taught in the medium-security prison by Osborne Family Services Coordinator Elizabeth Maldonado, recently made its debut at Albion. And the initial reviews have been very positive.

The goal of the three-month program is to provide the inmates with the knowledge and insight that they need to become better parents when they are reunited with their families. A variety of educational, counseling and group sessions allow the inmate mothers to get a handle on their past behavior patterns and hopefully provide them with the tools for change. A key component of the program is regular facility visits with their children to help them restore family ties that have been fractured by incarceration.

The Family Ties Parenting Skills Program is one of several prison-based programs run by The Osborne Association, which long has enjoyed a successful and productive relationship with the Department. The relationship helps to meet the association's long-time mission of helping people who are involved in the criminal justice system achieve self sufficiency, adopt healthy lifestyles, acquire the skills needed to enter the workforce, rebuild their families and become productive, law-abiding residents of their communities.

As of earlier this year, dozens of inmate mothers at Albion had completed the course in the hopes that they could become good role models for their children when they return home and ensure that their children do not make the same mistakes that they did.

"This has been a wonderful offering for the inmate mothers," said Albion Superintendent Anginell Andrews. "The inmates are very enthusiastic about this new course and those who have taken it have nothing but praise for the program. A lot of inmates here really do want to turn their lives around and be good mothers when they return home and this class provides them with a variety of pointers and the various life skills needed to help them meet that goal."

Commissioner Goord said programs like this are vital in ensuring that inmates don't return to prison.

"The more tools that we are able to provide our inmates to help ensure that they succeed on the outside, the better off we all are," said Commissioner Goord. "The ongoing efforts of The Osborne Association and our dedicated staff members at Albion and the other facilities where this parenting skills course is being offered are helping to achieve that goal."

Using the curriculum that she crafted after much research, Ms. Maldonado's Family Ties Parenting Skills class meets three times a week in two-hour classes for three months. There are only a few dozen inmates in each class to ensure a high degree of focus and interaction. The intensive curriculum of the program helps the inmate mothers to understand their responsibilities as mothers, supports them in maintaining long-distance relationships with their children and prepares them for the rigors of returning to the community.

In short, the goal of the program is to strengthen the ties between imprisoned mothers and their children. The logic is simple: inmates who maintain strong family ties while they are incarcerated are less likely to return to prison after they have been released than those inmates who do not maintain strong family ties.

Inmate Darlene Hattan, a recent graduate, said she was impressed with the program and very grateful to have participated. She said the course went a long way toward helping her improve her parenting skills because "they listened to my problems and I learned a lot about my actions and about my children."

An interesting component of the program is

that Family Ties participants benefit from the program's visiting service, which is entirely funded by The Osborne Association. To help foster family ties in a positive, structured environment, Osborne officials and volunteers provide the children of program participants with occasional weekday transportation to the facility. The visits between mother and child typically last about four hours. Children often visit their mothers on weekdays several times during the three-month program.

As compared to the hustle and bustle of regular weekend and holiday visits at other medium-security facilities, this special arrangement allows inmate mothers and their children to spend time together in a relaxed and quiet environment under the supervision and guidance of Osborne staff and volunteers.

"Some of these mothers have had little or no physical or emotional contact with their children for a very long time, which can make meaningful communication difficult," said Ms. Maldonado. "Our assistance helps to make these encounters less stressful and more enjoyable and productive for all involved."

Before and during these structured and organized visits, Osborne Association counselors and volunteers are available to ensure that the time spent together is a positive experience for mothers and children alike.

Family Ties also provides transitional counseling and case management services to assist in the re-entry process. Services begin when the mothers are still in prison, to help cushion the often rocky path home.

"If it wasn't for The Osborne Association, I wouldn't have all this relevant and useful information to take with me to the street," said inmate Tracy Jourdanais, a recent program graduate

Inmate Luz Mendez, also a recent graduate and mother of three, said: "The program had a great impact on me. I learned so much, even things I didn't expect that helped me build my self-esteem and become a better parent to my children."

Upon release, participants in the program are eligible for all Osborne services that are offered in the community. They include substance abuse treatment services, HIV/AIDS services and vocational assistance.

"This program has had a positive impact on the entire facility," said Ms. Andrews. "The staff and volunteers from Osborne are able to interact so well with the inmate mothers and provide them with the positive guidance they need. I can honestly say that this is one of the finest programs that we offer here at Albion."

The Osborne Association has served people involved in the criminal justice system and their family members for over 70 years. The association is committed to continuing the legacy of its founder, Thomas Mott Osborne, a former mayor of Auburn who later became warden at Sing Sing.

Mr. Osborne's commitment to the rehabilitation of inmates began when he spent a week posing at Auburn Correctional Facility as inmate "Tom Brown," living under the same conditions as other "inmates."

This experience was the beginning of his belief that society can and must play an important role in helping inmates and former inmates make positive changes.

As Mr. Osborne used to say: "The important thing is not what society owes to the prisoner, but what society owes to itself."

Parenting program coordinator Elizabeth Maldonado works with inmates at Albion.

Clinton
Kathy Leary
Secretary

Collins
Stacey Nagel
Counselor

Coxsackie
Wendy Bopp
Teacher

Downstate
William Carmichael
Correction Counselor

Eastern
Robert Posner
Correction Counselor

Edgecombe
Loretta Mealy
Corr. Counselor

Elmira
Sheryl Graubard
Inmate Griev. Supr.

Fishkill
Marcia Tavano
Administrative Aide

Five Points
Denise Butler
Academic Supervisor

Franklin
Larry Sears
Administration Dep

Fulton
William Sanchez
Correction Officer

Gabriels
Debbie LaGree
Secretary II

Georgetown
Renee Buddie
Correction Counselor

Gouverneur
Carl Hunt
Program Dep

Gowanda
Jim Galati
Volunteer Services

Great Meadow
Susan Hart
Secretary

Greene
Peter Chmura
Education Supervisor

Green Haven
Tom Levanduski
Senior Counselor

Groveland
Robert Blair
Recreation Leader

Hale Creek
Theresa Young
Calculations Clerk 2

Hudson
Peter Tenerowicz
Correction Officer

Lakeview
Michael Mosher
Program Dep

Lincoln
Joan Taylor
Senior Counselor

Livingston
Donna Pitt-Hickman
Correction Counselor

Lyon Mountain
Angie Petrashune
Counselor Aide

Marcy
Robert Cunningham
Asst Program Dep

Mid-Orange
Dolores Barnes
Secretary

Mid-State
Linda Bloser
Keyboard Specialist

Mohawk
James Mance
Program Dep

Monterey
Carolyn Colunio
Secretary II

Moriah
Steven Gagnon
Correction Officer

Mt. McGregor
Gwen Duncan
Grievance Supervisor

Ogdensburg
John Crowley
Program Dep

Oneida
Anthony Labriola
Correction Captain

Orleans
Jose Reyes
Correction Counselor

Otisville
Chris Andre
Recreation Leader

Pharsalia
Cheryl Daughtrey
Administrative Aide

Queensboro
Carmen Johnson
Program Dep

Joint federal, state venture

Vets program offers services to inmates

Counselors address special needs of offenders in 3 downstate hubs

A relatively new venture between DOCS and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) offers veterans nearing release a host of new opportunities.

Under the agreement, certified counselors and other staff members at VA hospitals visit interested veterans in the Sullivan, Green Haven and New York City hubs to talk with them to assess their needs upon release. Their goal is to provide a treatment and support program specific to their individual needs to ensure their success upon their release. Counselors and clinicians also conduct telephone interviews with veteran inmates in prisons throughout the rest of the state to assess their needs upon release and set up a program for them.

In the future, the Department is also hoping to have the capability to use teleconferencing so clinicians can conduct formal interviews with mentally ill inmates throughout the state. These interviews are currently conducted by phone. Clinicians say they are better able to assess the needs of individual veterans by seeing their gestures and body language in responding to their questions.

"This provides a needed bridge to ensure that veterans who are released back into the community are getting the services that they need, and are entitled to, in order to assist them in becoming productive and law-abiding members of society," said John H. Nuttall, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Program Services. "We have long provided comprehensive services in our facilities to address the unique needs of incarcerated veterans and this new program is a needed and welcomed extension of those valuable services."

Sixteen years ago, the Department started a six-month residential program for incarcerated veterans at Mt. McGregor. The program was expanded to seven other facilities but, to enhance efficiencies and tap into available outside veterans resources, those programs were recently consolidated at Groveland, Otisville and Mid-State. Meanwhile, the Department has contacts for veterans at every facility.

The residential program houses incarcerated veterans together at the three facilities so that they may participate in in-depth individual and group counseling related to veterans issues such as adjustment and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The inmates are required to develop a comprehensive release plan for their return to the community. Participants have access to representatives from the federal and state departments of labor, the VA, the Division of Parole, the Office of Mental Health, plus local veterans organizations and groups. Inmate program associates serve as clerks and facilitators under the supervision of the civilian staff coordinator.

The goals of the program include helping incarcerated veterans become aware of their entitlements and benefits and available community resources; to assist them in verifying their veteran status; to provide in-depth counseling to address service-related problems, and to provide access to veteran service providers in the community.

The Department also provides group counseling and other ongoing services for veterans at six facilities: Attica, Auburn, Franklin, Great Meadow, Green Haven and Gowanda.

"New York state has long provided valuable in-house services for its incarcerated veterans and this new collaborative effort between the Department of Correctional Services and Veterans Affairs has provided a smoother and better means of transition back into the community for these inmates," said Taylor Hallman.

Mr. Hallman is the forensic outreach coordinator based at the Montrose VA Hospital in Westchester County who has personally met with many veteran inmates in the New York City and Hudson Valley hubs to assess their specific needs upon release and craft a transitional release plan that addresses those needs.

"The more contacts and tools we can provide them, the better their chances of succeeding upon their release from prison," he said.

Since the new VA outreach program began in the early part of 2001, Mr. Hallman estimates he and clinical staff have visited, and clinical staff have interviewed by telephone, almost 500 veteran inmates who were preparing for their release. He stresses that the multi-faceted services that he and his co-workers offer incarcerated veterans are strictly optional.

Nassau Elementary School children gather 'round their wooden "school store."

Students get mobile school center

Students at Nassau Elementary School in Poughkeepsie are reaping the benefits of the skills and ingenuity of a Green Haven vocational instructor and inmates enrolled in his carpentry class.

While recently touring another school, Nassau educators and members of the Spackenkill PTA came across a rather novel educational device. They encountered a square wooden storage unit that could hold books and other school supplies. It featured a top that could be unfolded and expanded to create a makeshift store where students could practice selling wares to their fellow students. Figuring the unit could provide benefits to their students, the Nassau educators and parents approached Green Haven officials to see if they could lend a hand.

Under Vocational Instructor Angelo Iacomini, eight inmates enrolled in the facility's carpentry course spent 240 hours crafting the sturdy wooden unit. The result was a unit that could be unfolded in three separate ways to provide the space needed for Nassau students to display books, pens and pencils and other school supplies for sale. When the sale is over, the three extended wings of the unit can be folded and the unit locked with the unsold materials stored inside.

"The inmates were very excited about this and so was I," Mr. Iacomini said. "A project like this not only gives the inmates an excellent opportunity to practice the skills they have learned but it also provides them with an opportunity to give back to the community. That's very important when you're in prison."

Design plans for the project were crafted by the instructor with input from the inmates.

"The inmates did an excellent job, taking my simple design and improving it," said Mr. Iacomini."They came up with ideas to enhance the cabinet with their own decorative molding. They also addressed the safety of the project by adding stops on the drawers to protect little fingers. When building a project for small children, safety and durability are important."

Mr. Iacomini is not alone in his kudos.

"On behalf of the students ... I want to thank you and your students for the absolutely beautiful cabinet that you built for our use as a bookstore," James Barnett, Nassau Elementary School principal, wrote in letter to Mr. Iacomini. "This will be of immeasurable value to us as we provide our students with a place for them to purchase additional needed classroom supplies."

Riverview
Rebecca Fiacco
Administrative Dep

Rochester
Benjamin Taylor
Assistant Director

Shawangunk
John Tumminia
Recreation Leader

Sing Sing
James Farrell
Asst. Prgrm. Dep.

Southport
Paul Sweeney
Teacher

Sullivan
Leonard Findling
Correction Counselor

Summit
Kathleen Johnson
Clerk II

Taconic
Patricia Ennis
Vocational Instructor

Training Academy
Charles Koemm
Sergeant

Ulster
Robert Krom
Psychometrist

Upstate
Kathy DeCelle
Secretary II

Wallkill
Michelle Reale
Inmate Grievance

Washington
Duff Hildreth
Volunteer Supervisor

Watertown
Sarah Campbell
Volunteer Services

Wende
Diane Catalfu
Senior Counselor

Willard
Helen Bunting
Librarian

Woodbourne
Elias Carrillo
Program Dep

Wyoming
Barbara Myer
Counselor

Employees can contact your "stringer" with ideas for stories and photos for DOCS/TODAY.

Jurist lauds long-term success of Sullivan's YAP

The long-time success of Sullivan's Youth Assistance Program (YAP) is what convinces town of Burlington Judge Henry Manzo and others like him to keep traveling long distances to come back time and again.

Like many other facilities of varying security levels throughout the state, Sullivan's YAP targets at-risk youths in communities through New York. Once identified by educators, parents, police agencies, the courts or others, these at-risk youths then are ferried under outside supervision into prisons to meet one-on-one with trained inmate YAP volunteers. There, inmates tell them how they wound up in prison, relay the loss of identity and the pitfalls and dangers of prison life and urge them to make wise choices in the future as to not wind up behind bars.

Sullivan inmates provide insight on their crimes to students of law enforcement.

Sullivan's YAP, however, has an additional component that helps to lure Judge Manzo and others like him. Sullivan's YAP caters not only to at-risk youths but also high school students interested in pursuing careers in law enforcement. By meeting with the inmates, they're able to get a keen insight into the aspects of criminal behavior, what it's like in a prison and what people can do to help ensure they never wind up in prison.

Judge Manzo, who also is a criminal justice instructor with the Hamilton-Fulton-Montgomery BOCES, traveled to Sullivan recently with about 20 students who are enrolled in his class. There, they were able to experience the reality that is prison and meet with the inmates, with the hopes being that such an experience will assist them in their law enforcement careers as they deal with the criminal element and related factors.

"This is without a doubt the best YAP program in the state," said Judge Manzo. "It's a good way for me to give my students a taste of what it's like to be in prison."

Judge Manzo started sending at-risk youths who appeared in his courtroom to Sullivan's YAP about 10 years ago.

"These were kids who were at the end of their ropes," he said.

Seeing how effectively the Sullivan YAP had addressed the needs of the at-risk youths that he referred, Judge Manzo quickly followed suit with his criminal justice students when he found Sullivan had devised a modified YAP that could cater to their needs and also give them valuable insight.

"It's good for them to see what it's like inside a prison and listen to the inmates," he said.

Judge Manzo said he believes the program is valuable for everyone, whether they're classified as at-risk or not.

"They're all at-risk to a certain extent," he said of today's youth.

The chief difference in the two programs is that the program for criminal justice students isn't as direct and "in-your-face" as the program for at-risk youth, said Sullivan Superintendent James Walsh.

"Through these two similar yet different programs we're able to provide a valuable service not only to at-risk youths but those who may pursue careers as police offices, correction officers, probation or parole officers and other law enforcement officers," Mr. Walsh said. "We can give them an insight that they just can't get outside the walls. And we know we've got two very good programs because we have people like Judge Manzo and others keep coming back, often from rather long distances."

Judge Manzo's criminal justice students seemed somewhat taken aback when the four YAP volunteer inmates addressed themselves by their DINs, not by their names.

"You lose your identity in prison, an identity you have been working on all your life," one inmate told the students. "You become a number. You are just a number."

Another inmate relayed the tale of how you seemingly have a mentality of invincibility when you're young, that you can do whatever you want to do and nothing bad will ever come of it.

"I got high on PCP (angel dust) and tried to kill my family," the inmate said. "With all the stuff (drugs) that I did before I finally wound up here, I shouldn't even be (alive) today. If you're not doing drugs, don't start. If you are, stop.

"There's only two places you'll wind up doing drugs: in jail like me, or dead."

Another inmate volunteer advised the students to be their own persons and not cater to the whims of others.

"I'm in prison because of peer pressure," said the inmate, who said he shot and killed someone and wounded another because his peers told him that if he didn't he would be considered a wimp and a coward. "I'm doing 41 to life because of peer pressure. Don't let yourself be placed in that situation.

"Don't," he pleaded.

Transitions

January 2003

Name	Title	Location
Promotions		
Frederick J. Levison	Wastewtr Treat Plant Op 2	Altona
Ann E. Driscoll	Sr Utilization Review Nurse	Auburn
Judith N. Bradley	Secretary 2	Chateaugay
Lee Braggs	Wastewtr Treat Plant Op 3	Great Meadow
Richard Lambert	Industrial Training Super 2	Great Meadow
Cynthia R. Stephens	Commissary Clerk 3	Hudson
David Jones	Assistant Shipping Super	Main Office
Peter J. Hickey	Nurse Administrator 1	Main Office
Nancy Eskins	Head Account Clerk	Mid-Orange
Ralph R. Fondario	Food Administrator 1	Oneida
Surekha Ashok Soni	Dentist 3	Sing Sing
Barry J. Capell	Plant Superintendent B	Southport
Gregory J. Moore	Cook	Upstate
Becky Ann Reddish	Nurse Administrator 1	Woodbourne
Retirements		
Robert E. Cavanaugh III	Teacher 4	Altona
Donald B. Assmann	Teacher 4	Auburn
Robert Blossom, Jr.	ASAT Program Assistant	Auburn
Carol E. Harvey	Dental Assistant	Bedford Hills
Terrence R. Dash	Correction Counsleor	Cayuga
Cynthia Chase	Mail & Supply Clerk	Clinton
John C. Cetin	Clinical Physician 2	Collins
Kathryn Fernandez	Teacher 4	Coxsackie
G. C. Foster	Vocational Instructor 4	Eastern
Michael J. Bintz	Superintendent	Gouverneur
Carol Unger	Correction Counselor	Gowanda
Russell D. Vara	Correction Counselor	Gowanda
David E. Thacker	Dep Supt Security 3	Green Haven
Barbara Ann Moore	Principal Account Clerk	Green Haven
Patricia F. Wohlfahrt	Keyboard Specialist 1	Green Haven
Henry R. Weinert	Plant Superintendent C	Greene
Gaetan L. Wray	Senior Mail & Supply Clerk	Groveland
John W. Windus	Plant Superintendent B	Main Office
Arthur C. Roberts, Jr.	Facilities Planner 2	Main Office
Antoinette Furness	Calculations Clerk 2	Mid-State
Peter R. Nardiello	Dep Supt Admin	Mt. McGregor
Barbara S. Whitman	Nurse 2	Ogdensburg
Robert Moore	Head Laundry Supervisor	Sing Sing
Linda M. Comfort	Keyboard Specialist 2	Southport
Mary Ann Kamph	Nurse 2	Taconic
James Susi	Electrician	Wende
Linda P. Lucas	Motor Vehicle Operator	Willard
Rita A. Bouldin	Keyboard Specialist 2	Woodbourne
Reginald Lee Bresette	Correction Lieutenant	Bare Hill
Edward E. Brewster	Correction Lieutenant	Cayuga
Robert J. Mizerek	Correction Lieutenant	Eastern
Arthur J. Byers	Correction Lieutenant	Mt. McGregor
Willie T. Huggins	Correction Sergeant	Arthur Kill
Colleen Zeller	Correction Officer	Bare Hill
Oree Hanna	Correction Officer	Bayview
Francisco A. Ramos	Correction Officer	Beacon
Gary E. Brushnefski	Correction Officer	Clinton
Berndt J. Leifeld	Correction Officer	Eastern
Richard H. Brown	Correction Officer	Eastern
Francis E. Larrabee, Jr.	Correction Officer	Elmira
William K. Winebold	Correction Officer	Elmira
Dana L. Rockhill	Correction Officer	Franklin
Dean R. Farrell	Correction Officer	Great Meadow
Burnie F. Spink	Correction Officer	Groveland
Craig Spooner	Correction Officer	Hale Creek
Frank Soriano	Correction Officer	Mt. McGregor
T. L. Malin	Correction Officer	Mt. McGregor
Jeffrey B. Baker	Correction Officer	Mt. McGregor
Gordon Williams	Correction Officer	Mt. McGregor
M. L. Osick	Correction Officer	Mt. McGregor
Peter A. Baumann	Correction Officer	Otisville
Allen Suber, Jr.	Correction Officer	Queensboro
Frederick W. Roth	Correction Officer	Ulster
Linda Lucas	Correction Officer	Willard
Thomas H. Manzolillo	Correction Officer	Woodbourne
Curtis E. Parks	Correction Officer	Woodbourne
Deceased		
Thomas J. Connolly	Stores Clerk 2	Arthur Kill
Barbara Miller	Keyboard Specialist 1	Eastern
James O'Hora	Correction Officer	Auburn
Robert F. McQuillen	Correction Officer	Coxsackie
Michael J. Janeski	Correction Officer	Elmira
Daniel W. Eherts	Correction Officer	Mid-Orange
Michael B. Richardson	Correction Officer	Oneida

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/

Butler crews dig in to dig out Oswego fire hydrants

After a ferocious snowstorm blanketed the Oswego area with two feet of snow in a mere four hours on January 15, staff and inmates from nearby Butler were there to help out.

And their help was definitely needed because by the time the vicious onslaught finally tapered off later that night, 40 inches of snow had accumulated in some spots in the region.

At the behest of local officials concerned about the safety of area residents, three supervised community service crews consisting of 27 Butler inmates and three Correction Officers were dispatched to Oswego the morning after the storm. Under the direction of Oswego Deputy Fire Chief Michael Ross, their initial assignments were to dig out buried fire hydrants in the vicinity of Oswego Hospital, local nursing homes and area schools. They were then dispatched as needed to other main parts of the city to perform similar chores.

Supervised Butler inmates clear fire hydrants.

The following day, once again at the request of local officials, staff and inmates were at it again. This time, four supervised crews consisting of 26 inmates and four Corrections Officers reported to Mr. Ross. The crews continued to dig out hydrants on main and then side streets, many of which were buried under more than six feet of snow because of high winds and the seemingly non-stop street plowing efforts of local highway officials.

Inmates and staff returned the following Tuesday, with two Officers supervising 16 inmates.

"They really got hammered in Oswego and I'm glad that we were able to immediately lend them a hand to help ensure the safety of area residents. It was imperative that the fire hydrants were cleared as quickly as possible so firefighters could access them if needed," said Superintendent James Morrissey. "Our crews have always been a vital component in communities throughout this part of the state and we will continue to make our crews available to municipalities and local not-for-profit agencies in their times of need."

The crews were summoned back to the city and also ventured into the town of Oswego on January 28. They worked an additional four days as many of the city's 1,000 fire hydrants and the 600 or so hydrants in the town were still buried in snow. Three crews of 30 inmates, supervised by three Officers, handled the digging chores on January 28 while two crews of 20 inmates, supervised by two Officers, worked January 29-31, primarily in the town.

In all, the inmates spent about 700 hours digging out fire hydrants in January while staff provided about 80 hours of security supervision. It was grueling but much-appreciated work.

In nearby Mexico, G. Scott Hunter figured that January 15 was going to be an ordinary day, so he never thought about canceling school.

"We monitor the weather very closely," said Mr. Hunter, superintendent of the Mexico School District on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario. "We expected a standard day and made the decision to open based on that."

Instead, that winter's day turned extraordinary in a hurry, thanks to a 10-mile-wide band of lake-effect snow which fell at a dizzying rate.

The band of heavy snow first hit Oswego just before 10 a.m., then eventually churned across the county forcing most school districts, courts and some businesses to close early.

At one point, snow was pelting Oswego at the astonishing rate of more than six inches an hour. A heavy snowfall typically dumps two inches an hour, according to meteorologists. Snow fell at an even faster rate in Parish, where six inches fell in 50 minutes, translating to a rate of almost seven inches an hour, according to the National Weather Service.

"If this isn't a record, it's got to be pretty darn close to it," said Mike Pukajlo, a meteorologist for the weather service in Buffalo. "It's stupefying. I can't even imagine it."

By 3:30 p.m., weather conditions grew so severe along Interstate 81 that state police closed the southbound lane at the Sandy Creek, Pulaski and Tinker Tavern exits for three hours. The Oswego County 911 Center reported 118 weather-related accidents or vehicles off the roads between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. No serious injuries were reported in any of those incidents.

Nightfall only brought more stupefying effects – thunder, lightning and wind gusts between 25 and 35 miles an hours, creating mammoth snowdrifts in many places.

"It really was quite the mess out there, but they seem to be getting back to normal;" said Mr. Morrissey.