

CCWF PAPER TRAIL

AMPLIFYING VOICES • EMPOWERING CHOICES



www.ccwfpapertrail.org

CHOWCHILLA, CALIFORNIA 93610

VOL. 1, ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 2024

A Sense of Accomplishment Reigned the Day for Pre-Apprenticeship Grads

By Brenda Bowers

On Tuesday, July 30, 2024, Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) held a pre-apprenticeship graduation in the local gymnasium.

What is a pre-apprenticeship? If you have a keen interest in construction, the pre-apprenticeship program is the key to successfully getting your career started. This program offers you the opportunity to go directly into an apprenticeship with on-the-job training with pay. There are a multitude of

opportunities here, such as forklift cert, scissor lift cert, fire proofing cert, fall protection, CPR, OSHA 10 certifications, among many other benefits.

Fifteen of CCWF's residents felt the highs of their accomplishments as they witnessed their hard work, time, and effort be appreciated.

At around 9:00 a.m., the graduating class slowly trickled into the gym. As they entered, they were surprised by the decorations that were laid out before them. The tables held

handcrafted centerpieces that were purple, white, and gold. A mix of pop music echoed in the background, as the graduates made their way around the room, mingling and making introductions.

The room was occupied not only by the graduates but also by Construction Training Rehabilitation Program (CTRP) formally known as Inmate Day Laborer (IDL) Darren Morris, Superintendent III, Terri Huie, Construction Supervisor II



Pre-apprenticeship graduates pose for a group picture with instructors and representatives of the CALPIA. Photo Courtesy of CDCR

...CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CCWF'S First-Ever Farmer's Market

'Amazing' was the word of the day

By Megan Hogg

The flier posted on the bulletin boards in Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) B Yard contained words that no one expected to see - not even on a flier in association with the Insight Garden Program (IGP), which provides vocational gardening training and other programming at CCWF and other California prisons. It read:

"FARMER'S MARKET to be held for B Yard, September 28, 2024."

I found myself fixated on those words. They raised pleasant emotions about my childhood, when I frequented farmer's markets with my family and

spent time cultivating a vegetable garden with my grandfather in his backyard. I always got immense joy from seeing the vegetables grow, holding the bowl he'd place them in when they were picked, and poking around in the soil.

I also thought it would be amazing if something like that was actually going to happen because incarcerated people only get food in three ways. They can eat at the prison cafeteria, which relies heavily on processed food. Or they can make personal purchases at the commissary, which is more like 7-11 than a grocery store. They can make personal quarterly purchases from an approved package ven-

dor. We very rarely have access to fresh produce, though we could in theory prepare it since CDCR residents have access to hot pots and microwaves in the housing units. According to representatives at IGP, no California state prison has ever held a farmer's market. And, indeed, "amazing" turned out to be the word of the day when this very first market finally took place.

As I was preparing to leave my unit that warm morning, I could feel everyone's energy both anxious and excited about going. No one knew just what to expect. What B Yard housing unit was going first? Would there be a time limit? Had the cops said anything?



...CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Left, Elizabeth Lozano and Leilani Simmons pose with flowers. Right, participants collect fresh produce from excited IGP inside volunteers

Photos by Kelly Fogel

2

BRIEFS FROM THE OTHER SIDE

Writing and art by CCWF residents on display in the Bay Area.

5

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Why nutrient-rich meals matters at CCWF

6

TWICE PUNISHED

Why we shouldn't give up on our immigrant friends and neighbor's post-incarceration

7

A FELON'S ALPHABET

... Starting with Accountability

NEWS

CCWF ON THE OTHER SIDE



Gala Features CCWF's Newspaper

Recently paroled contributing writer Jamie Harrison (pictured, left) represented the CCWF Paper Trail at Pollen Initiative's annual gala and fundraiser, Inside Scoop. The event, held at Mill Valley Recreation Center on Oct. 9, 2024, brought together voices and stories from the prison journalism community, focusing on the importance of rehabilitation and the transformative power of second chances.

CCWF Artists Work Displayed in Marin Show

The Marin County Civic Center exhibited artwork by participants at CCWF, among other California prisons, as part of the Visions of Hope art show. The exhibit and accompanying panel discussion were hosted by Life on Art and the People's Commission for Integrity in Criminal Justice from Oct. 10-24.



COVER STORY: PRE APPRENTICE GRADUATION ...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

(CSII), Emilie Bard, OSHA Instructor; Josh Flowers, Construction Sup. II (CSII); Jesse Rios, MCR Pre-Apprenticeship Instructor; Perla Ponce, CCWF's Correctional Business Manager I (CBM I); and Tradesman Amanda Perez, Paul Cleary, Robbie Robinson, and Chris Roman.

Special among the guests were family members of graduates. When graduate Nancy Barrientos walked in, her family greeted her. Every face in the room held a smile as they looked on at the heartfelt embrace. "I'm excited and happy that my family is with me," Barrientos stated, speaking about her sisters.

Later that morning those same gym doors opened up for Sara Sims' family, as her mother and stepfather walked in. "I feel a sense of accomplishment; it gives me strength," Sims said emotionally, as she hugged her mother.

As the graduates walked about the room introducing their families to everyone, CTRP Tradesman Amanda Perez snapped photos, capturing intimate moments. Meanwhile, Emilie Bard, OSHA Instructor, presented the graduates with their OSHA 10 cards, with looks of accomplishment on their faces, they graciously accepted.

"I really don't like microphones," stated Darren Morris as he made his way to the stage. Morris announced that IWL is now called CTRP and that they are overseeing the pre-apprenticeship program. Darren spoke of how the graduates were going above and beyond. He welcomed and recognized the families that were able to join the ceremony. In his closing, he introduced CCWF's own Correctional Business Manager I, Perla Ponce.

"I want to thank all of you for your hard work," Ponce said as she spoke of the many projects that CTRP has accomplished for the institution over the years.

Darren made his way back to the stage and acknowledged CCWF's staff, corrections officers, administration and tradesmen for their time and effort. "There's a big effort that

keeps our train moving," said Darren as he introduced Jesse Rios, pre-apprenticeship instructor.

"I'm proud of you girls. You are the first 100% graduating class," Rios said. He spoke on the importance of a pre-apprenticeship and how having it allows you to go directly into an apprenticeship program without having to take the apprenticeship entry test. He also spoke of the tangible benefits of the program, like how it makes you more marketable, and how you can earn money while getting on the job training as a tradesman.

As Rios stepped to the side, Darren walked back on the stage. "You're clearly responsible for the success and failure for your future," were the final words Darren left the graduates with before introducing CSII Terri Huie. Huie, along with Rios, presented the graduates with their certificates of completion, fall protection, OSHA 10, and fork lift/scissor lift, among other certifications.

As the day neared its end, everyone made their way to the tables, awaiting the still-hot Costco pizza, sodas, white sheet cake, and strawberries. As the graduates made their way to the tables to be served, conversations of gratification were heard throughout the room.

At the closing, Perez pulled up a cart filled with backpacks and water bottles. The excitement on the faces of the graduates was priceless. Perez randomly drew names from a hat, giving some selected graduates first dibs at what choice and color of backpack and water bottle they wanted.

Congratulations to the graduates: Rosemary Heather Miller, Judith Ramirez, Nancy Rodriguez, Yvonne Keith, Elaine Deleonguerrero, Sara Sims, Nancy Barrientos, My Nguyen, Porche' Wright, Cindy Dubose, Rachel Henderson, Otilia Pineda, Tamara Basset t, Misun Yoo, and Brenda Bowers.

CCWF Paper Trail EST. 2024

CCWF PAPER TRAIL IS A PIONEERING PUBLICATION THAT SERVES THE LARGEST WOMEN'S PRISON IN THE WORLD. IT ENGAGES WITH COMMUNITY, PROMOTES HOPE, CREATES POSITIVE SOLUTIONS, AND AMPLIFIES VOICES RARELY HEARD.

CCWF Paper Trail Staff

Amber Bray

Editor-in-Chief

Kanoa Harris-Pendang

Managing Editor

Delina Williams

News Editor

Sagal Sadiq

Features Editor

Nora Igova

Art and Layout Designer

Diana Lovejoy

Journalism Guild Chairperson

Administrative Review

Anissa De La Cruz

Warden

Cynthia Rojas

Chief Deputy Warden

Monique Williams

Public Information Officer

Todd Javernick

Information Officer I

Kate McQueen

Editorial Advisor

Jesse Vasquez

Editorial Advisor

Jake Custodio

Logo and Flag Designer

CURRENT AND PAST STORIES OF THE CCWF PAPER TRAIL

ARE AVAILABLE ONLINE AT: CCWFPAPERTRAIL.ORG

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @[PAPERTRAILCCWF](https://www.instagram.com/papertrailccwf)

PERMISSION IS GRANTED TO REPRINT ARTICLES APPEARING IN THE CCWF PAPER TRAIL PROVIDED CREDIT IS GIVEN TO THE AUTHOR AND THIS PUBLICATION, EXCEPT FOR ARTICLES REPRINTED HEREIN FROM OTHER PUBLICATIONS.

THE CCWF PAPER TRAIL ENCOURAGES INCARCERATED, FREE STAFF, CUSTODY STAFF, VOLUNTEERS AND OTHERS OUTSIDE THE INSTITUTION TO SUBMIT ARTICLES, POETRY AND ARTWORK. CONTRIBUTORS RETAIN THEIR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS BUT ALL SUBMISSIONS BECOME PROPERTY OF THE CCWF PAPER TRAIL.

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSION:

- » ARTICLES SHOULD BE LIMITED TO 350 WORDS AND MAY BE EDITED FOR CONTENT, CLARITY AND LENGTH.
- » ARTICLES SHOULD BE NEWSWORTHY AND PERTAIN TO THE PRISON POPULACE AND/OR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.
- » LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE SHORT, CLEAR AND TO THE POINT.
- » WE WILL NOT PUBLISH MATERIAL THAT IS OFFENSIVE, RACIST, SEXIST OR DEROGATORY TOWARD ANY GROUP.

SEND YOUR SUBMISSIONS TO:

POLLEN INITIATIVE

P.O. BOX 1493

ALAMEDA, CA 94501

What is the Electoral College?

The election may be over, but we're anticipating you've got questions about how the final vote took shape.

By Amber Bray

Every four years, the United States of America elects a president. But how does this actually happen? Unlike what many people envision, the president is not elected based on the amount of votes cast by citizens. While the amount of votes is important, it is not what determines the winner of the presidency.

The system the US has to elect a president is called the Electoral College. This topic became highlighted and hotly debated following the 2020 election and the insurrection on Jan. 6, 2021. But what is the electoral college and how does it work?

The Electoral College was created by the Constitutional Convention of 1787 and incorporated into the U.S. Constitution in Article I, Section 1, Clause 2. In Federalist No. 68, Alexander Hamilton outlined the thinking behind the Electoral College system and why the founders of the United States felt it was the best system to elect a president. Under the Electoral College system, electors are selected to represent each state. The number of electors per state is based on each state's combined total of senators and representatives in order to account for the state's population.

Following Election Day, each state's (and the District of Columbia's) electors assemble in order to certify the

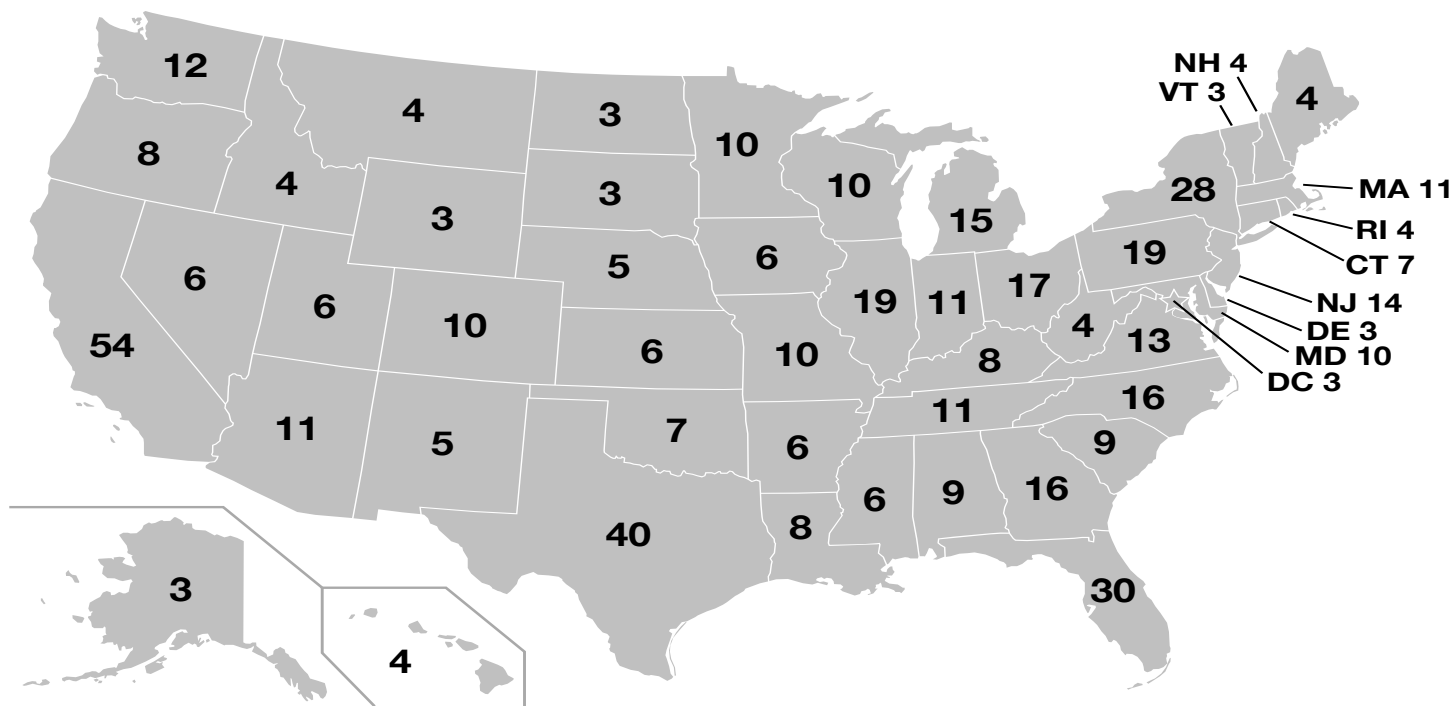
state's vote count. For 48 of the states, as well as DC, the candidate who received the most votes receives all votes of the electors. (Nebraska and Maine have different rules.) Because of the "winner take all" nature of electoral votes, one can see why candidates focus on the so-called swing states where the number of electoral votes are essentially up for grabs.

What this translates to is a handful of states holding the keys to the White House, since the majority of the states are solidly red or blue.

Historically, on five occasions, the president and vice-president have won the majority of the Electoral College votes while not winning the

popular vote. In 1876, 1888, 2000 and 2016, the Electoral College elected the president who did not win the most votes. In 1824, no candidate received a majority of the Electoral College vote setting the stage for Congress to elect a president.

Given the advances in technology and communication over the more than 200 years since the United States became a country, the underlying reasons for the Electoral College have largely been abolished. To truly enact the will of the people, all votes should matter and the president should be elected by winning the popular vote.



This map of the Electoral College has been scaled to reflect the voting numbers for the upcoming 2028 United States presidential election.

The number of electors per state shown on this map is based on each state's combined total of senators and representatives in order to account for the state's population.

Image credit of Kingofthedeath, CCO, via Wikimedia Commons

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



We're delighted to share with you excerpts from mail we've received from across the state. If you have some thoughts you'd like to share, please write us at our Pollen Initiative address.

I really enjoyed your perspective – it was a nice change after years of SQN and the Post. As I read through your paper, I thought of my mom, sisters, ex-wife and adult daughter (43 now but 27 the one/only time ever seeing her).

I'm glad to see good things happening at CCWF – I hope to hear much more for the sake of all the women there and their families and supporters. I hope y'all looked out for each other when Costco came to town!

Be good, do good, work hard.

J. Stoner
Soledad, CA

Congratulations on your Vo1. Issue 1. I am prayerful for your group and readers... Kudos for your truths and awareness.

K. Cockrelli
Stockton, CA

Congratulations on the publication of your first edition of your newspaper. We at the Mule Creek Post received our first copies this past week. As a result, the entire newsroom stopped to read it front to back. Our first impressions were unanimous: It's pretty darn good.

Great anticipation among our staff built over these passing months, as we'd spent some time with [Pollen Initiative's] Jesse Vasquez and Kate McQueen talking about it. Their excitement was contagious, and you did not disappoint. We welcome your team of professionals to the world of prison journalism. Your voices will fill a void that could not be filled by anyone else, and we are honored to share in this partnership between CCWF Paper Trail, the Mule Creek Post, San Quentin News, and Pollen Initiative. As we share space and distribution, we at the Mule Creek Post offer to share resources, research, and collaboration. ...

All in all, it's a wonderful paper and a perfect beginning. One can only imagine how it will grow, how it will mature, what heights you will take it. You have great ideas, a vision, a direction towards which to move forward. Just remember who you are writing for, constantly ask yourselves if you're true to your mission or if it needs to change.

One thing I will add as a caution, which comes from the mistakes we've made. Don't let differences of opinion and vigorous debate divide you. Keep the communication open, let voices be heard, be willing to compromise, and don't be afraid to say "I'm sorry" often.

Sincerely,

Al Rice, Copy Editor
Mule Creek Post
Ione, CA

NEWS

COVER STORY: FARMER'S MARKET
...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Each snippet of conversation I caught as I walked by added to my own anticipation.

I was released through the facility gate and quickly made my way to the gym, where the market was held. My eyes adjusted from the bright sunlight, the first thing they focused on were brown paper grocery bags lined up side by side. Then I heard the deep “frump” sound of another bag being unfolded and set in line. It brought me surprise and wonder—yes, just the paper bags.

Our community resources manager, Gabriella “Armie” Armendariz, was seated at a table inside the door and instructed me to fill out and sign a media release form while she collected my ID card and ducat, a sort of prison hall pass. I was then given a small wax paper envelope containing several tickets of different colors that could be redeemed for different items.

Stepping forward, I was provided with one of the grocery bags. I also got a map that illustrated the set-up of all the booths and what they offered and a produce guide containing descriptions, properties, nutritional information of different fruits and vegetables, and recipes. Looking around, I observed inside and outside volunteers making final preparations at each of the five booths spread around the gym. They featured fruits, herbs, vegetables, soaps, and flowers.

Our incarcerated firefighter team, the residents of the CCWF firehouse, were the first group to enter. Each carried grocery bags that were full and bulky from the items they'd received. Fire Captain Robert Rios told me that despite being out on a call until 3 AM. that morning, one of the first things the ladies asked that day was, “We're still going to the farmer's market, right?”

Then I asked the ladies what they thought. “I'm amazed by all of the different vegetables and colors,” Giovanna Vargashernandez said. Priscilla Charris agreed. “This is great. The freshness and needed nutritional value. I've never had squash before,” Charris said. “This makes me want to start a garden at the firehouse.”

Awaiting the next residents, I spoke with Andrew Winn, IGP's executive director. The idea for the farmer's market, he said, came to fruition with the help of CDCR administration at the local and state level, including Armendariz, CCWF warden Anissa De La Cruz, and the CDCR director of adult institutions Ron Broomfield. Winn said that IGP's good working relationship with CCWF administration made it a great place to pilot the market.

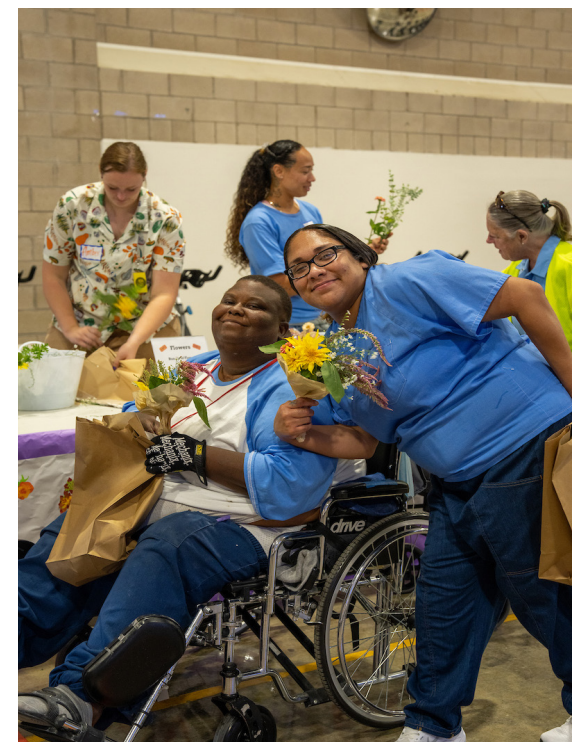
To pull off the event, IGP worked with farmers in the Fresno area, who provided produce donations. These included: Avenal State Prison C-Yard IGP, Blossom Bluff Orchards, Laurel Botanicals, Mendoza Farms, Thao Family Farms, That Good-Ish Soap Company, and Rancho de Rodney. The program supplemented the donations with their own purchase from FreshKo., a Fresno-based produce supplier. In addition to donating, Rancho de Rodney and Alcatraz Gardens also sent representatives to volunteer their time. All in all, IGP provided 1,000 lbs of produce to residents free of charge. Each person could claim an equal share by exchanging their tickets for produce.

“I wanted everyone to have access,” Winn said about the payment system. “I was incarcerated for nine years and didn't have money on my books. I know what it's like so I didn't want anyone to miss out just because of that.”

Upon their arrival, I watched the first two units as they took in the variety of fruits – there were large wooden salad bowls overflowing with honeydew melon, watermelon, bunches of grapes, plums, and pluocots sitting next to green plastic baskets full of strawberries.



Special thanks to Kelly Fogel for these amazing photos. Check out her work at <https://www.kellyfogel.com/index>



I heard the inside volunteers repeatedly saying, “Yes, one ticket will get you the whole thing,” in response to the disbelief expressed by so many that they'd be getting a whole basket of strawberries or bag of grapes. And that was just the fruits!

I became emotional when I witnessed another incredibly beautiful moment. The flower booth was the final step before exiting the gym and each incarcerated person received a small handmade bouquet. Yeun Byun, an outside volunteer, was handing a lady her bouquet, with a large warm smile on her face. The humanity, love, and kindness in that brief exchange brought me to tears. The woman receiving the flowers seemed so touched and I was able to see the gratitude both of them felt.

Byun had stopped flower arranging for years due to being devastated by a relative's incarceration. Only recently had she returned. She looked forward to the farmer's market so she could distribute both the flowers and information to residents here.

When I asked people how they felt while attending and what they thought of the farmer's market, Rickie Jones said, “Amazing, I am so happy to be here and have all of this fresh food – the flowers too. It's great.” Kimberly Guzman said she was “surprised and happy. This was really good. Everyone was friendly and welcoming.” Francis “Francisco” Velasquez said he was “too hot, but it was worth the wait. I hope they do this more.” I overheard a young woman agree that the experience was amazing and she, “was excited for grapes, even though they ran out.”

The IGP staff were excited too, including Marlin Jeffries, who handed out fresh garlic cloves, sage, thyme and rosemary while working at the herbs booth. Jeffries became part of IGP in 2015 while he was incarcerated; he paroled in 2017 and has been on the Board of IGP since 2019.

“This is monumental,” Jeffries said. “I've never seen or heard of anything like this.” He also joked about purchasing onions on a fundraising sale during his

incarceration and how he'd hold onto them for so long that “they'd sprout green leaves and be ready to be planted” since he didn't know when he'd have access to fresh onions again.

As the day came to a close, I had the chance to fill my own grocery bag with a head of fresh lettuce, eggplants, plums, strawberries, and herbs. I was giddy carrying my brown grocery bag out of the gym. I didn't get any squash or a pumpkin, but as I stood next to my bunk that evening, I thought about the day and how amazing it felt to have been a part of it.

That brought to mind how many times I had heard that word expressed throughout the day. It was fitting. I suspect the next Farmer's Markets for C yard and D yard, scheduled for February 22, 2025, will be even better.

***This story is co-published with the Daily Yonder, a non-profit newsroom that provides news, commentary, and analysis about and for rural America. @ <https://dailyyonder.com>.**

By Diana Lovejoy

One of the first handouts distributed to new arrivals in CCWF Receiving gives mental health tips, including recommendations for a balanced diet with fruits, vegetables, lean proteins, and whole grains. These basic health tools are almost entirely unavailable at CCWF.

In fact, California's female prisoners exist in a dangerous gap between what prisons claim to provide versus the damage to our health through poor food. If nutrition was prioritized as a meaningful part of rehabilitation at CCWF, chow would look a whole lot different. Here are some reasons why CCWF should double-down on its efforts to provide healthy foods.

A Learning Deficit

A prisoner's entire focus during incarceration, ideally, is on: 1) developing emotional awareness, discipline and empathy, as well as connecting and integrating what led to their crime; and 2) pursuing any missed education, from GED to college. This requires access to decent nutrition, which is a prerequisite to effective learning of any kind.

Countless studies have shown that nutritious meals play an essential role in higher levels of focus and concentration during learning. This was the basis of Michelle Obama's programs during her White House years to provide nutritious school lunches, especially in underserved areas of the United States. In director-producer Michael Moore's documentary film *Supersize Me*, several inner-city schools changed their fast-food lunches to nutritious alternatives. Their teachers unanimously reported huge improvements in students' focus and performance, plus the near-total elimination of anger, aggression and violence at school.

It's not hard to see similarities between these inner-city schools and CCWF. The majority of women's cases involve mental health issues, trauma, and/or substance addiction. Mental health treatment is especially important, but it is available on a very limited basis in jail and prison. So, it's even more critical that residents have some fundamental prevention of further anxiety, depression and anger. What a game-changer it could be to be able to meet these challenges with the tool of nutritious food.

At the same time, unhealthy food disables prisoners physically and psychologically. It's well known that poor nutrition plays a significant role in anxiety and depression, A.D.D., anger and

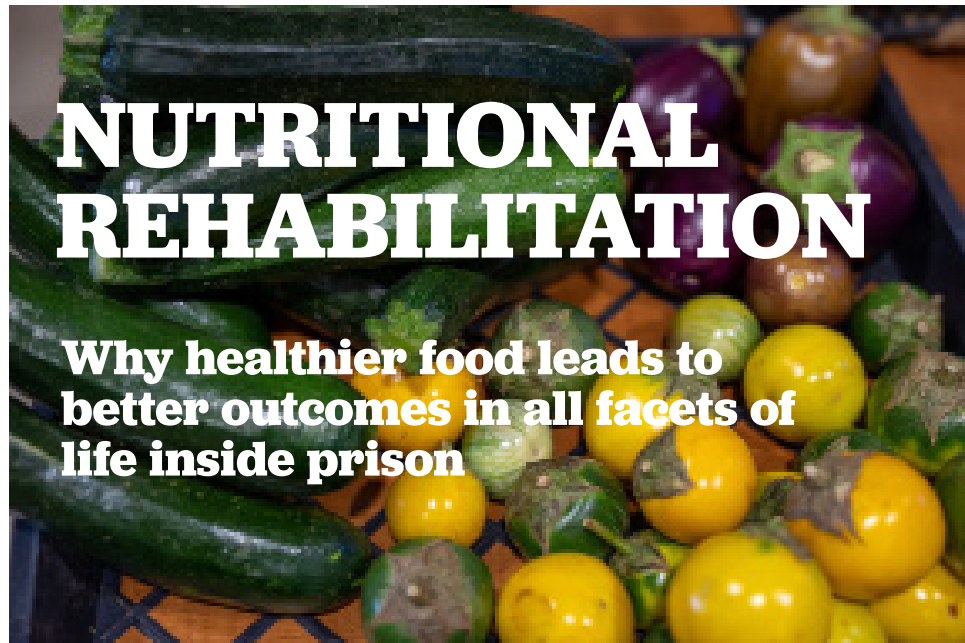


Photo Courtesy of Kelly Fogel

impulse control, and other psychological issues. A 2022 review by *Frontiers in Nutrition* cited multiple studies that showed that a shortage of B vitamins, zinc and magnesium increases risk of depression and other mental disorders involving the nervous system. However, Vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids reduce the risk of depression and other psychiatric disorders. These nutrients are notably missing from prison fare.

Fake Health

According to Bureau of Justice statistics, about 44% of people incarcerated in the U.S. have experienced chronic conditions like high blood pressure, diabetes and other heart problems. In comparison, 31% of the general population suffer from these conditions. The National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCCHC) noted in 2023 that incarcerated people commonly gain weight, which increases their risk of serious health conditions.

While the institution is quick to administer insulin shots to diabetics and serves low-sugar pudding or Jell-O water substance with evening chow, the menu is still a diabetic disaster. Real-world nutritionists advise diabetics to follow a high-protein, low-carbohydrate and low-glycemic index diet with minimal sugar. Here, the food pyramid is upside-down, with carbohydrates comprising the majority of daily calories. Rice and beans are added to fulfill daily calorie requirements, adding unnecessary carbohydrates to meals. No, beans are not a complete protein.

Every meal served at the chow hall includes three to five servings of carbohydrates, with an average of a half serving

protein, and one to 1.5 actual servings of fruit or vegetable. A "serving" of salad is typically one-quarter cup of iceberg bits, possibly with a few tiny carrot and cabbage shreds. It takes three to four prisoners' salad servings to fill one small salad bowl.

Often the menu lists two to three fresh fruit/veggie items for breakfast and lunch combined, but there is only one provided. Sometimes the item isn't consumable without extra preparation, such as a single, whole white onion. It's a fake-out to list "fruit" on the menu and then serve four-ounce plastic bags of 95% corn syrup and water. Meanwhile, diabetics can buy all the usual sugar-bomb snacks and carbs from canteen, from candy bars to popcorn.

The NCCCHC also recognized the dangers of such ingredients, including processed meats, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, and hydrogenated oils. saying that "the consumption of ultra-processed foods...and processed meat may increase all-cause mortality." Dishes such as chili and sloppy joe's are swimming in a greasy corn-syrup broth. Corn syrups and hydrogenated oils have been linked to cancer, heart problems, blood sugar imbalance, and fat gain, especially around the middle body. If a diabetic consumes sugar-free pudding at the same time as a cup of corn-syrup sauce, is there any blood-sugar benefit?

A Serving is Not a Serving

What if you bought some milk labeled "one gallon," and it was clearly a half gallon? Sometimes a child-sized CALPIA milk carton is one-half to two-thirds full. Those eight grams of pro-

tein suddenly became 3-5 grams. The printed menu may appear to fulfill the state's base nutrition requirements, but prisoners are driven by a deep hunger to spend a lot more on canteen or quarterly vendor products.

Parts of the menu distributed to housing units look acceptable, but the document often masks an uglier reality. Protein is notoriously under-represented; foods such as beans, bean chili, nuts, or spaghetti are counted, but they are not complete proteins, and some are still high in carbohydrates. California Code of Regulations Title 15 cites a daily requirement of approximately 68 grams of protein (42 grams from meats, fish, eggs, beans and nuts, plus approximately 24 grams from dairy servings). In reality, chow provides about 35 grams of protein per day on average, if all food servings are consumable.

A Simple Vision for Improvement

Occasionally there are attempts at adding more nutrients to the menu, but they are short-lived. Some of the dinners briefly included mixed dark greens in minuscule amounts, but for reasons not publicly disclosed, this was taken away again. Dark, leafy greens should be a dietary regular for everyone!

It would be simple and doable to reverse the food pyramid and switch key ingredients to healthier, real-food options while maintaining cost. Conveniently, CCWF is placed square in the heart of an agricultural haven of California fresh foods. The state could cultivate relationships with local farmers to obtain bulk deals on fresh fruits, nuts, vegetables, eggs and chicken, at the least. A regular appearance of the newly piloted farmer's market would be a fabulous way to bring more nutrition inside these walls.

Additionally, low-sugar, high-protein snacks could be provided by the canteen store, including lower-sugar protein bars, nuts, dehydrated berries and colorful vegetables, like dark, leafy greens, carrots and peppers. The NCCCHC recommends adopting a diet based on national standards for nutrition and food safety, "offering a variety of labeled, healthy commissary food and beverage options; and implementing wellness programs that include behavioral management strategies and exercise programs for managing weight gain" among its solutions.

Let's work to make this vision match reality.

The CCWF Paper Trail Editorial Team brings you

Strawberry Cake



Jessica Lewis the Painted Square via Unsplash

Ingredients:

1 16 oz. pkg. strawberry cream cookies
1 16 oz. pkg. vanilla wafers
4 pkgs. strawberry instant oatmeal
1 12 oz. lemon soda
2 tbsps. strawberry jelly
1 tbsp. butter
3-4 whole strawberries

Directions:

Separate cream from cookies and set cream aside. Crush all vanilla wafers and cookies as fine as possible and combine in a bowl. Add the oatmeal, 10 tbsps. of soda, and 1 tbsp. of butter and knead thoroughly. You might need another 1/2 to 1 tbsp. of soda as you knead, but be mindful - you don't want the dough to be too wet. Once kneaded, flatten dough into the bottom of a large bowl and even out. Allow dough to dry for three to four hours. After the dough has dried for approximately two hours, put on water to boil. While the dough is drying, put the cookie cream and strawberry jelly into a bag and boil it for at least one hour, stirring occasionally. When the dough is dry, remove the bag from the water and pour contents over the top of the dough. Smooth out and allow to cool for approximately two hours. Slice whole strawberries and garnish on top. Enjoy!



Image by worlebon

COMMENTARY

Kicked Out of Their World

Reflections on the Fate of Immigrants Post-Incarceration



Photo AI Generated by Pollen Initiative

By Nora Igova

Immigrants cannot make mistakes. When they do, they are kicked out of their world.

Even when they have spent the majority of their lives in the United States of America. Even those brought to the country as young children.

Here's what happens when an immigrant serves time in prison. The punishment of incarceration becomes only the first layer of a lifelong struggle. Upon release from prison, the immigrant will likely be transferred to a detention facility pending deportation. They will be ripped away once again from loved ones and sent to a country about which they know little, maybe even nothing.

When you get to know incarcerated individuals facing Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) deportation orders after they have learned from their mistakes, paid their debts and made amends, it becomes much easier to understand why their resident status should be evaluated and treated on an

individual basis. Let me introduce you to a few of these individuals here at CCWF.

I was born and raised in Bulgaria, a small country in Southeastern Europe with a population half of Los Angeles. I grew up in communism, where everyone was "equal" yet no one felt the equality. Safety and opportunities were not exactly the words one might use to describe that environment; however, not knowing better, I didn't do better. I came to the United States of America when I was 18 years old with hope for a better life and opportunities. God knows I did not make good choices in life with respect to life planning and had my fair share of disappointments, obstacles, and poor decision-making. But never in a million years did I think I would go to prison.

However... here I am. Now, I am 46 years old and have been in America longer than I have been in my native country. Even though my biological family is still in Bulgaria, my chosen family is in America and the thought of being deported is overwhelming.

I have not been in Bulgaria for more than 20 years. The environment I will be thrown into is one I no longer understand or can relate to. I left feeling like a throwaway of society. Going back to a country where I know I will be judged, targeted, and spoken down to by my community. I will go back with a heart of shame, exposing my relatives to the town gossip in a disgraceful way once again. I will hear whispers, "The embarrassment has returned to town." Having an ICE hold leaves me so uncertain of my future.

Ursula Gomez is another individual who shares my fate, through her journey to the U.S. took a different path than mine.

"I came to the United States of America when I was 5 years old," Ursula Gomez told me before she left CCWF, "and having an ICE hold is stopping me from having a concrete plan upon release. It does not allow me to put things in

motion, so I can move forward with my plan. I am not treated as a citizen and I feel there is something wrong with me as a person. I have no family members in Mexico."

Ursula will be thrown into an environment she knows nothing about, without any family ties and support, without language skills, left feeling like a throwaway of society, a society in which she lived most of her life. I fear for her being completely lost, becoming depressed

they leave behind. "When one of our peers is deported," Ohuafi said, "it feels like we have lost a family member to a battle we've all been fighting."

Our community members not facing deportation also feel the loss strongly too. My friend and colleague at the Paper Trail, Amber Bray, said it well:

"As women, we make emotional attachments and connections with our peers. We come to love one another like family. The fact that so many of our loved ones are facing deportation - many to a country they have never known - is tragic and distressing. We continue to fight for them because they matter to us and we don't want to see them removed from communities of which they are vital parts."

Prison time should be enough punishment. All individuals can learn from their mistakes, walk out rehabilitated, and be a productive member of society. And since the U.S. has always been considered the land of the free and is a nation created from diverse people that have immigrated from all over the world, we must restore humanity and American values to our immigration system.

This is an especially important issue for California to consider and even to pioneer because, according to the Public Policy Institute 10.4 million immigrants - 23% of the foreign - born population nationwide - call California home.

A plan for the incarcerated immigrants should be included as part of immigration reform, so they are offered a fair chance to reenter society and

“As women, we make emotional attachments and connections with our peers. We come to love one another like family. The fact that so many of our loved ones are facing deportation - many to a country they have never known - is tragic and distressing. We continue to fight for them because they matter to us and we don't want to see them removed from communities of which they are vital parts.”

and possibly suicidal from the lack of support. Not having family, she could be subject to sex trafficking.

Simaima Ohuafi was even younger when her parents immigrated to the US from the Tongan islands - 18 months old. Due to her incarceration, now she faces deportation. "I consider myself an American," Simaima said, "however, I feel disposable, disregarded, and helpless, because America is giving up on me. My sanity, stability, and safety are in shambles. Both my parents died in America as hard working citizens. If deported, I will have no resources, no support system, nowhere to live, and I can never visit my parents' graves."

She fears she will be shunned, judged and culturally rejected - targeted for embarrassing the Tongan culture and possibly killed.

Our sorrow is not just for the ones who are ripped away but for the community

reunite with their family members while respecting the rehabilitation they achieved while incarcerated. The plan should be a combination of Pro-American and Pro-Immigrant. We should recognize that being a nation of laws goes hand in hand with being a nation of immigrants.

Considering the challenges we face, we as a community need to write or call our senators and/or representatives to express the impact some of the immigration laws have on our community and express what effective immigration reform looks like.

The goodness we can bring is why America should give formerly incarcerated non-citizens a second chance too.



ART BY: N. IGOVA

The Hope Within

Lessons in Mental Health I've Learned Through Years of Struggle and Healing

By Delina L. Williams

Many here at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF), myself included, are adopting new approaches to bring their mental health struggles into the light and to begin healing.

The process of healing fully is still a mystery. It's not easy to identify what works for whom and why. So let's inquire and make room for those of us in this world who need a little more time, care and compassion. Maybe, just maybe, we can find the route to wellness within and leave behind the scars.

I remember at one point in my life all I wanted to do was die. I could not fathom living in a world where nothing truly mattered. I was constantly having my stomach pumped because I would swallow pennies, pills, dirt, anything to take me from the house of chaos I lived in. I was alone. I was confused. I was a child. There could come no respite because I knew no cause.

Later on in my teen years, I continually had dreams where I was in my aunt's house looking over the balcony and suddenly I was dropping through the air; spiraling to the wooden floor. Before I hit the floor I would wake up. Death surrounded me and compelled me to throw myself to the wind. I could not bear to have breath inside of me nor a heart that beat for most of my living days.

The fears inside of me were brought out through internal conflict. Fear of life. Fear of my parents. Fear of everything. These truths haunt me to this day and my nights are still filled with the terrors I cannot escape. Yes, I have those lived dreams that bring me to my knees, heart conflicted and rapid. I struggle every night and wake none the wiser. It could be said that life is what you make of it and so it goes that I destroyed my life. Or so I believed for many years.

Yet even in fear, the mind's desire to have community is inherently plugged into our core as a human. To be without others is the equivalent of slowly dissolving into a pool of nothingness because all we, as humans, really crave is the warmth of another to understand us. Reframing the thinking processes in order to stimulate the brain out of

depression is not an easy feat. There is a complex maze of therapy, drugs, and willingness needed to see where the person can turn and promote self into believing self is worthy of others.

The New York Times mental health reporter Ellen Barry wrote an article back in November 2023, about a new study on traumatic memories, conducted by researchers at Yale and the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. The study found empirical evidence supporting the notion that traumatic memories are experienced in a different part of the brain than normal memories. They involve the posterior cingulate cortex, or P.C.C., the place of introspection or daydreaming. This finding is interesting because it means it could be possible, in a therapeutic context, to move the memory, so to speak, from the part of the brain that processes internal experience to the one that creates context, essentially turning traumatic memories into more manageable sad ones.

This gives a new slant to many who think they should just move through their days without validating their trauma. It surely should not be so. Healing means strength and that strength is necessary to build a trauma-informed community. It is in receiving trauma-based therapy through my current psychiatrist that I see the forest *and* the trees. The stigma of mental health treatment can no longer hold me down because I know I am more than what I used to be or what I used to do.

Additionally, I know there is a direct connection with quality sleep and negative thought loops, so I do my best to rest appropriately. As Dr. Alex Dimitriou, of Menlo Park Psychiatry and Sleep Medicine wrote in *Psychiatry Today*, "deep sleep renews metabolism, restoring insulin sensitivity to provide energy, and it boosts immune functions." This can help move me through my days. Should we choose to pick up a tablet at 9 p.m.? Certainly not! There have been many studies done by Harvard and other universities that conclude the "blue light" from screens can have a negative impact on sleep because it suppresses the secretion of melatonin, a hormone that influences sleep rhythm.

All this takes work. It takes trust. This



“All this takes work. It takes trust. This takes time. Being vulnerable means hearing things about yourself that are difficult to hear. It is necessary work.

takes time. Being vulnerable means hearing things about yourself that are difficult to hear. It is necessary work, in order for roots of change to manifest and take hold. I am certainly worth the work. And so is anyone who struggles with mental health.

I think poet *S.C. Lourie* says it best:

Be confused,
It's where you begin to learn new things.
Be broken,
Be frustrated,
It's where you start to make more authentic decisions.
Be sad,
Because if we are brave enough, we can

hear our hearts' wisdom through it.
Be whatever you are right now.
No More Hiding!
You are worthy,
ALWAYS.

I understand there will be days when my mind, mouth, and movements do not want to process my surroundings. I also understand that by not processing these surroundings, I am giving into a system that has slated me for failure. This cannot be. No! My potential is not designed to fail. I will overcome my mental health struggles. It is in the looking up and not around that I will see the beauty GOD ALMIGHTY has created for such a day as this. I believe there is hope for all who struggle within. Help is out there. It is in the work we do to rise

Felon's Alphabet

By Sagal Sadiq

Go to any self-help group attended by incarcerated individuals here in CCWF and I guarantee you the word accountability comes up at least once. It has become a buzzword, without which no conversation about rehabilitation is complete.

Accountability is, let me ask you something:

Do you know someone who is purportedly "fully accountable" for all aspects of their crime, yet is simply incapable of a simple "my bad" when it comes to taking accountability for missing group, taking out the trash, or even being inadvertently rude?

They can give you church-worthy sermons about how their actions during their crime were heinous and yet will engage in circular crazy-making

conversations all in effort to deny, minimize, and rationalize minor incidents.

For those people, I have two words: stop it. Accountability simply means taking responsibility for deeds done or omitted. That's it, nothing more, nothing less.

You are either a person who takes accountability or you are not. Selective accountability is not accountability.



FEATURES

Gifted Hands Crochet Project

How People at CCWF are Using Their Talents to Help the Outside Community

By Amber Bray

The brightly colored yarn was so soft as she crocheted, her mind intently focused on her stitches. Handmade blankets, scarves, beanies, and other items are highly sought after and can be incredibly expensive, if the prices on Etsy are to be believed. But the pale pink, peach, and white blanket this woman was crocheting was not intended for a loved one or even for sale. In fact, it was going to be given away to someone she had never met... and the woman was ecstatic at the opportunity.

The woman is named Erica Olson and she is a member of the Gifted Hands Crochet Project at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF). Olson has been a member of the project, along with its sister project - the Pillowcase Dress Project - for many years, spending countless hours making projects that are donated to the outside community.

"It's truly a blessing to be a part of something where I can help someone in need," Olson said.

Gifted Hands was started at CCWF in 2014 by Brandi Taliano, Maria Legarda-Renteria, and two other incarcerated individuals with the intent of allowing incarcerated participants to make items which are then donated to the community. For Gifted Hands specifically, items are donated to places such as homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, children's hospitals and veteran's hospitals. The individuals at CCWF partnered with Karen and Gary Bronson, members of the Arthur C. Hancock Memorial Foundation, (i.e., yarn, crochet hooks, knitting needles).

According to Taliano, there "was a lot of back and forth with the process" when Gifted Hands was proposed.

"There were about seven signatures needed before the proposal even got to the warden, and each one wanted



Community members enjoy looking through hats and scarfs made by the CCWF Gifted Hands Crochet Project at Wilma Chan Park in Oakland, CA on Feb. 2, 2023. Photos by Joyce Xi @joycexiphotography on Instagram.

something changed or needed clarification before they would approve it," Taliano said. "It took months to get the next signature."

Despite the slowness of the process, the founders persevered and the project was eventually approved.

Both Taliano and Legarda-Renteria have paroled from CCWF and now serve as Gifted Hands' outside sponsors. According to Taliano, the process for them to take over from Karen and Gary Bronson was a long one.

Numerous organizations have benefited from receiving the donated items from Gifted Hands. Places like the Chowchilla Police (PD) and Fire Departments (FD), the Little Angels Program, a program that helps parents when a baby dies, Ronald McDonald House, which helps ill children and Five Keys, an organization that helps unhoused people and individuals reenter society. Blankets made at CCWF have been sent all over the country in order to help those in need.

When asked about some specific instances, in which the blankets were used, Taliano said that Chowchilla PD and FD had blankets in the trunks of their vehicles in case they rolled up on an accident and a child was on scene. One former counselor at CCWF escort-



ed a veteran to Washington D.C. and gifted him a blanket upon their arrival. That same counselor and his family passed out slices of pizza and a blanket to the unhoused population one Christmas morning. In August 2023, over 300 blankets were sent to Maui to help with the devastating wildfire that ravaged the island.

Another organization that has benefited from Gifted Hands is the Asian Prisoner Support Coalition (APSC) which distributed over 250 beanies and 200 scarves in Wilma Chan Park in Oakland on Feb. 1, 2023. Legarda-Renteria, an APSC employee who was instrumental in the distribution, described the joy on recipients' faces as "amazing."

One of the intents of the project is to allow incarcerated individuals to make things for the greater community, which

gives them a way to give back to those in need. Yarn and other supplies are donated to the outside sponsors who then donate it to CCWF. Participants then knit or crochet various items knowing that they will be donated back to the community. In that way, participants are able to live a life of living amends in order to honor those they have harmed. Sentiments like Olson's are common amongst participants who actively donate their time and talents to benefit someone they've never met.

"We know they're in need of something we can make. It's a great opportunity to give, knowing we're helping make someone's life better," Olson said.

"There are no words to describe the look on a child's face or on the face of someone down on their luck," Taliano said.

"There is a twinkle in their eyes that says they know they're not forgotten. I remember giving a blanket to an unhoused gentleman and he said, 'Thank you for not yelling at me.' Another unhoused gentleman said, 'Thank you for thinking of me as a human being.' When we tell the recipients that the blanket we're giving them was made just for them... their smile lights up the sky. It's absolutely priceless," Legarda-Renteria said.

“There is a twinkle in their eyes that says they know they're not forgotten. I remember giving a blanket to an unhoused gentleman and he said, 'Thank you for not yelling at me.' Another unhoused gentleman said, 'Thank you for thinking of me as a human being.' When we tell the recipients that the blanket we're giving them was made just for them... their smile lights up the sky. It's absolutely priceless.”

