

RESIDENTS OF THE MONTH

East Campus

Nominator states: Mr. Poor is 198 days in program with zero IRs and is in the Honors Program. Mr. Poor has also made a HUGE turn-around from his last two stays where he struggled with substance abuse, spent time with the wrong crowd(s), and dealt with other life issues he was presented with. During this stay, Mr. Poor has maintained a very good head space, and has been compliant in every aspect of his program thus far. He has also been more than respectful to staff, and is almost always ready to share his story. Mr. Poor is a very viable option for ROM status.

Second Nominator states: Travis Poor has done a phenomenal program. He arrived with a positive attitude and has not diverted from achieving everything available to him. He goes above and beyond what is required with his recovery and has developed a solid release plan. He is not a management concern, and sets a great example to others. Resident Poor is a fantastic candidate for Resident of the Month.



Travis Poor

Women's Center



Nominator states: Tiffany Romero has done a great job since she has been here. When she first arrived, she had doubt of what she could accomplish. Since then, she has faced head on her challenges and now shows a confidence she didn't have before. She will be taking her TABE test next week. She has been working diligently on studying for it. She keeps up with everything that is required of her. She maintains a positive attitude. She has demonstrated the ability to overcome whatever obstacles that gets in a person's way.

Tiffany Romero

Nominator states: I would like to nominate Dana Baese. He has been in the program for 191 days. He has received 2 minor write ups but has also received 2 positive write ups for going above and beyond and actually that is how he has run his program to date, above and beyond. From the start he asked to be put in any and all programming available that could help him. So he has currently completed Relapse Prevention, Untangling Relationships, and Victims Impact. He is currently in MRT, Anger Management, and Parenting and has started Batterers Intervention at Green Apple. He continues to work full time and maintains his CD program and mental health counseling. He has paid off his reinstatement fee and is ready to take his driver's test again. He is very organized and keeps up with all aspects of what is due each week. To top it off he always has a cheerful attitude and appears to be in a great mental state and tries to encourage the people around him with his good attitude.

Second nominator states: Dana Baese is a very positive and authentic person. He sees his Center stay not as a negative, but rather as an opportunity to strengthen and solidify his skills. He volunteers to participate in groups and participates openly and honestly. He is a genuine person looking towards his future, at the same time maximizing the opportunities that are available to him. Dana presents as a person at peace with himself and his journey. His optimistic and pleasant personality makes a nice and notable difference in the life at West Campus. Dana would make a great Resident of the Month.

West Campus



Dana Baese

Residents Earn Their HiSET



Cree Lamere is tiny but mighty. Originally, she was not the least bit interested in obtaining her HiSET. Cree commented that she is glad her CTS, Karen Conley, pushed her; otherwise she probably wouldn't have even tried. "I just thought I didn't need it. I felt like I wasn't smart enough to do it."

Cree had taken all of the tests about 8 years ago, but was short by 1 point to get her HiSET. She sought guidance from Education Coordinator, Allen Heisler, and chose the Social Studies module to get that point, and she did it! She had no idea she would gain so much confidence. "Now I feel like I can do a lot more with my life. I think that was the only thing that was keeping me from not moving forward and making my goals. Now that I have my HiSET I feel like I can do anything I want."

Cree recently decided she wants to be an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), so she is making plans to pursue that goal.

Cree closed with, **"I'm sure if I can do it, then anybody else can do it."**

Christina Temple is full of life, always carrying a smile, and ready to brighten someone's day. She has a great attitude and is staying focused on her program.

Why did she pursue her HiSET? "Because I spent a lot of time just sitting around and not doing anything. I wanted to better myself – and I want to be something."

Christina came here only needing to pass the math portion of the testing. The first time around she didn't put much effort into answering the questions, resulting in a fail. The 2nd time around she said she looked at everything carefully and did the work, and voila she passed! Christina is one of those fly by the seat of your pants kind of girls. She's not into studying, but has the smarts to do well when she applies herself.

Christina has her eye set on cosmetology school. She has always been interested in makeup and hair and has plenty of experience under her belt, mostly from experimenting with her own hair and makeup. She commented that she loves dying hair and has colored her hair various arrays of colors.



Christina shared some great advice: **"Life is what you make it. Live a good life. You deserve it. Life is too short to be miserable all the time. It's just not worth it."**

Lindsey Jaeger - Honors Member



Lindsey Jaeger, new Honors Member, will already be starting her new life by the time you read this article. Lindsey will be living at Wings in Helena, a women only transitional facility. Living at Wings will help Lindsey solidify her strength and make sure that her own wings are flight ready for life in the community. She chose this option to give herself the best possible outcome and is willingly and ready to do what it takes. For the first 60 days, she will be enrolled in intensive treatment, while living in her private room in the facility located downtown. Fellow residents and staff will provide support, encouragement and companionship. Lindsey will have the re-assurance of knowing she is not alone and that others are on the path to community transition and recovery.

Lindsey is clear about her intentions and her decision to act in her own best interests. Having struggled with an opioid addiction since she was 17, she is unapologetic about her need to both give and receive support, in another structured environment, to allow herself the best possible start in community life. Lindsey characterized her ultimate freedom as not necessarily being free of the system. Rather, her ultimate freedom is being free of active addiction.

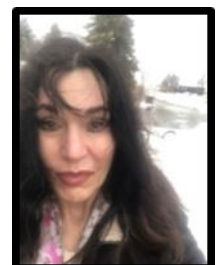
Lindsey is an engaging, intelligent and lively person and her excitement and intensity during our interview was non-stop. Her energy was contagious and I was writing as fast as I could to capture the essence of what she has learned and what she wants to share.

First point: You must do the work. There is no getting around this, as Lindsey well knows, since she certainly tried! During her first Center stay, avoiding the real work was her game plan. "I thought I could get by not doing the work. But the reality is that you can't just jump through hoops and be okay. I rebelled against everything, only to find myself thrown back into custody." Lindsey continued, "Running a good and honest program takes a lot of work, honest work and you have to have the right mindset."

Second point: Self-love, self-care, self-respect and self-compassion. No compromise on these principles, they are absolute. Lindsey explained, "I now take care of myself and I do things that are in my own best interest. I am no longer closed off and negative." Lindsey admitted that the self-love concept was difficult at first, but the staff at Passages kept on message and Lindsey said, "It finally clicked." Now she can say truthfully, with composure, "I'm loving who I am." Lindsey continued, "It took a lot for me to learn to love and respect myself. But now, with my self-respect, I do honestly care about myself. I now do things that help me achieve my goals." Lindsey said that being open and honest opens pathways for goals to be realized.

Third point: Honesty, stop with the lies. Lindsey has embraced the ethics of honesty, to the point where, "I get a lot of anxiety if I start to lie. Now honesty is ingrained in me and I feel completely guilty if I slip." This is another boundary that must be firm, because, "little lies catch up with us."

Lindsey is truly ready to live her life armed with her new mindset. She has returned to what she loves to do, including writing, music and reading. She will soon be going to college for welding. She is evaluating her social circle to find the most positive outcomes. She said, "Now I care and I know where I'm going."



Lindsey Jaeger - Honors Member – continued

By Sheena Jarvey

When asked, Lindsey concluded the interview with words of wisdom from the heart; wisdom that is working for her in a real way.

“Love yourself. You are all that you got. Also, you can do anything you want.”

Lindsey said that before she would always wake up with a feeling of dread. Now? Now her world is alive with new and exciting opportunities.

“Things do get better if you put in the work. Keep moving, keep moving forward. Do the next right thing and things will fall into place.”

We are very pleased to welcome Lindsey to Honors. We wish her all good things moving forward and best wishes for success in life.



Healthcare Recognition Ceremony

Congratulations to Kristie (Iverson) Harrison for obtaining her Certified Nursing Assistant licensure from Great Falls College MSU! Allen Heisler, Sheena Jarvey, and I attended the ceremony at the college. Pictured is Kristie with her mother and step sister. It's amazing all that Kristie has accomplished while a resident here at the center. It goes to show that a person doesn't need to make excuses for not having enough time or that there are too many limitations while a resident to work on higher education. Kristie's next goal is to become a registered nurse. You go girl!



Erin Seidler's

Mom made this beautiful quilt for one of Erin's friends that is having a baby.

The Importance of Family Dinners

IFAS Extension, University of Florida

Tidbits from Robin

Busy schedules of both parents and children make it harder to have "family dinners." But families may not be aware of the benefits that come with regularly eating together at the table. Research suggests that having dinner together as a family at least four times a week has positive effects on child development. Family dinners have been linked to a lower risk of obesity, substance abuse, eating disorders, and an increased chance of graduating from high school.

Conversation

Eating dinner together as a family provides the opportunity for conversation. This lets parents teach healthy communication without distractions from smart phones, television, computers, and mobile devices.

By engaging your children in conversation, you teach them how to listen and provide them with a chance to express their own opinions. This allows your children to have an active voice within the family.

Conversations at the dinner table expand the vocabulary and reading ability of children, regardless of socioeconomic status. Family dinners allow every family member to discuss his or her day and share any exciting news.

Use these tips to encourage conversation:

- ❖ Discuss the child's day. Express an interest in your child's daily life.
- ❖ Discuss current events. Bring up news that's appropriate for your child's age.
- ❖ Let all family members talk. Be an active listener and be sure your child learns to listen as well.
- ❖ Encourage your child to participate. Do not underestimate your child's ability to hold a conversation.

Developmental Benefits

The sense of security and togetherness provided by family meals helps nurture children into healthy, well-rounded adults. Frequent family dinners have a positive impact on children's values, motivation, personal identity, and self-esteem. Children who eat dinner with their family are more likely to understand, acknowledge, and follow the boundaries and expectations set by their parents. A decrease in high-risk behaviors is related to the amount of time spent with family—especially during family dinners.

To make the most of your family mealtime, follow these guidelines:

- ❖ Turn off television, radio, mobile devices, etc., during dinner.
- ❖ Have family dinners at least four or five times a week.
- ❖ Enjoy positive conversation during the meal.
- ❖ Spend an hour eating dinner, conversing, and cleaning up together.

Nutritional Benefits

Eating dinner together as a family also encourages healthy eating habits and provides a model for children to carry with them into adulthood. Studies show family dinners increase the intake of fruits and vegetables; families who eat dinner together tend to eat fewer fried foods and drink less soda; and family meal frequency is linked to the intake of protein, calcium, and some vitamins.

Here are some mealtime suggestions:

- ❖ Cook as a family and include everyone in the preparation process.
- ❖ Experiment with fun recipes.
- ❖ Remake old recipes with healthier alternatives.
- ❖ Have "theme" cuisine nights such as Italian, Mexican, or Caribbean.
- ❖ Know your children's favorite meals and cook them on a rotating basis.
- ❖ Create your own recipes.

Nightly family dinners may require effort in planning, but the benefits in mental and physical health to you and your family are more than worth it.



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NURSE'S STATION



Heidi Hunter, RN

Tranq Dope: Animal Sedative Mixed With Fentanyl Brings Fresh Horror to U.S. Drug Zones

Taken from The New York Times article dated January 7, 2023 by Jan Hoffman

Over a matter of weeks, Tracey McCann watched in horror as the bruises she was accustomed to getting from injecting fentanyl began hardening into an armor of crusty, blackened tissue.

Something must have gotten into the supply. Switching corner dealers didn't help. People were saying that everyone's dope was being cut with something that was causing gruesome, painful wounds. "I'd wake up in the morning crying because my arms were dying," Ms. McCann, 39, said.

In her shattered Philadelphia neighborhood, and increasingly in drug hot zones around the country, an animal tranquilizer called xylazine — known by street names like "tranq," "tranq dope" and "zombie drug" — is being used to bulk up illicit fentanyl, making its impact even more devastating.

Xylazine causes wounds that erupt with a scaly dead tissue called eschar; untreated, they can lead to amputation. It induces a blackout stupor for hours, rendering users vulnerable to rape and robbery. When people come to, the high from the fentanyl has long since faded and they immediately crave more. Because xylazine is a sedative and not an opioid, it resists standard opioid overdose reversal treatments.



Ms. McCann shows a photo of herself last summer shortly before she fled Kensington, when she weighed only about 90 pounds. Photo Credit...Neeta Satam for The New York Times

As with many trapped by tranq, Ms. McCann's hellish descent began with prescription opioids. In 2009, when she was 27, she developed a dependence on painkillers prescribed after a severe car crash. A boyfriend she met at one of her six stays in rehab introduced her to heroin. Cheaper and more potent fentanyl elbowed heroin off the streets. Then, as the Covid-19 pandemic descended in 2020, tranq stormed Philadelphia.

Last July, she was evicted from her room in Kensington. "I was sleeping on the sidewalks crying every night, knowing that I was better than that," Ms. McCann said. Someone next to her got shot. A man tried to rape her, but she defended herself with a box cutter. On the hot summer streets, she saw people whose tranq wounds were covered with fleas and maggots. Even so, she said, "I could not pull myself away from that drug."

Brooke Peder, a 38-year-old tattoo artist nicknamed the Hood Grandma, rolled her wheelchair to the exchange check-in and handed over a gallon container filled with syringes. Her mother, sister and wife died of overdoses. Just over a year ago, her right leg had to be amputated because of an infection from a tranq wound that bore into the bone.

Ms. Peder, who has been using drugs in Kensington for 13 years, said she was eager to warn about tranq, especially to newbies arriving in the neighborhood, lured by its decades-old reputation as a drug marketplace. They come from all over the country. Many arrive with money and pay locals to seek out drugs, until they turn into locals themselves, she said.

She unrolled a bandage from elbow to palm. Beneath patches of blackened tissue, exposed white tendons and pus, the sheared flesh was hot and red. To stave off xylazine's excruciating withdrawal, she said, she injects tranq dope several times a day. Fearful that injecting in a fresh site could create a new wound, she reluctantly shoots into her festering forearm. "The tranq dope literally eats your flesh," she said. "It's self-destruction at its finest."

Unsuspecting Kensington customers saw an advantage to the new mix: A bag of heroin ran about \$10, tranq dope \$5. But costs accrued. Kim Barauskas, 53, wondered why, after shooting up, she was falling over, waking up later and then immediately feeling that "we're all sick again and need to get another shot."

“Most people tell me, ‘I wish I could find dope that didn’t have xylazine,’” said Dr. Joseph D’Orazio, an expert in toxicology and addiction medicine at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia, which treats dozens of xylazine users daily. “But what gets put out there on the street is what people have to use.”

Reversing an overdose where xylazine was involved is tricky. A dose of the overdose-halting medicine naloxone, which blocks or reverses opioids’ effect on brain receptors, will address the fentanyl but still won’t rouse a victim sedated with xylazine. Desperate rescuers may try a second or third dose. But too much naloxone can put someone into withdrawal, vomiting and writhing.

Even when opioid withdrawal is contained, the harsh xylazine withdrawal continues. People keep using tranq dope for fear of “getting sick”: migraines, double vision, nausea, numbness in fingers and toes, sweats and body-rattling anxiety. There is no medical protocol yet for managing it; Dr. D’Orazio typically uses anti-anxiety drugs to treat the patient’s symptoms.

Doctors are perplexed by how xylazine causes wounds so extreme that they initially resemble chemical burns. They may not even appear at injection sites, but often on shins and forearms.

Ms. McCann’s tranq-scorched forearms reeked, oozed, itched and seared. Washing them regularly was nearly impossible, with public restrooms her only source of clean water.

She finally made her way to Prevention Point’s wound care clinic, where nurses debrided sores, dispensed antibiotic ointment and supplies and taught her how to change bandages. Using toenail clippers and alcohol wipes, she meticulously trimmed the eschar.

One day in August, she caught a glimpse of herself: Normally weighing 150 pounds, she was down to 90. “I thought, I either need to do a lethal shot of xylazine or get the hell out of Kensington,” she said.

The only person who would let her use a cellphone was a guy whose arm and leg had been amputated because of his tranq wounds. He was still injecting into his leg stump.

She made her decision. Now in her fifth month of sobriety at an intensive outpatient program near St. Louis and at a healthy weight, Ms. McCann is both stunned by and proud of her progress. From wrist to elbow, her meandering pink and purple scars are a road map of being lost and found. “People out here might think my arms look really ugly, but they aren’t familiar with tranq wounds yet,” she said. “To me, my arms look really beautiful now.”



Ms. McCann is now in her fifth month of sobriety and back to a healthy weight. Photo Credit...Neeta Satam for The New York Times



Kim Barauskas said that right after she accidentally injected tranq into an artery, she felt like her hands had been dipped in acid. Her fingertips may need to be amputated. Photo Credit...Hilary Swift for The New York Times

Brooke Peder’s leg was amputated after an infection from a tranq wound bore into the bone. She hopes to save her arm, although she reluctantly injects tranq in it. Photo Credit...Hilary Swift for The New York Times



Travis Granger - Honors Member



Travis Granger, new Honors Member, is not here for anyone's negativity or labels. He is not here for any dishonesty, either, not anymore.

Travis had been at the Center for several months when he stole from his employer, which landed him in jail. This brought Travis to a place where he really was at a crossroads. Continue with the dishonesty, continue with the addictions, continue with getting by with lies and play out his chances until his life really would fall apart, for real and for good. Travis explained, "After I stole I was so disappointed with myself and disappointed I let down my partner Scott. I was slipping into a criminal mindset and it went like this: I won't get caught and everyone else is doing it. The temptation made these justifications seem plausible. I thought I could fool myself."

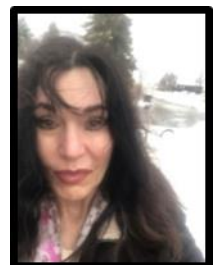
Travis came out to his mom when he was 25. (Mom responded by telling Travis she already knew, which was probably a bit anticlimactic). None the less, although that particular hurdle wasn't as difficult as anticipated, still, there is nothing easy about being gay in small town Montana. Travis had a huge fear of rejection. Still, he forged ahead, being tired of living a lie, and in the darkness he faced, he began to find light. He just couldn't wear the mask any longer.

Although his sexuality was no longer hidden, Travis was still not honest about his addictions and criminality. Part of it was fueled by the resentments he still harbored as to the way society might view him and this kept him in a negative mindset, justifying using and illegal behaviors.

This mindset came to a sudden halt during his most recent jail stint. Travis recounted, "It instantly hit me. I told myself enough is enough. I need to man up, be responsible and stop being childish. If I cheat and lie to myself, the consequences for my actions will always be there. I was given enough rope to hang myself and I did." So, while sitting in jail, as guilt and regret washed over him, Travis became resolute. As painful as it was, this was also cleansing. Being in jail this time was different, this time it opened his eyes and re-set his thinking. He thought about his relationship with his partner Scott, his addictions and his relationship with society.

Travis realized afresh, what he already knew. "Scott and I love each other and we complement each other. I help him stay young at heart and he supplies me with wisdom." His partner Scott was worth straightening his life out for, plus he knew Scott was reaching the end of his rope and Travis didn't want to risk losing him. A person can only put up with so much. Travis needed to re-set their relationship while an element of trust still existed.

Travis also began a new job, selling phones at Wal-Mart East. Unsure at first, Travis said, "I took this job as a challenge, to challenge my work ethic." Sales, however, can be tricky and can veer into unwanted territory of half-truths, manipulations and hustle. Travis knows these pitfalls and so he stays clear on his principles, "I don't lie. I tell people straight up." He continued, "For three months I pushed myself and took it more seriously than any other job. I'm a competitor. My second month I took second top salesperson in the state. This month (March) I'm number one salesperson in the state."



NEWS BY SHEENA JARVEY

Travis Granger - Honors Member - continued

By Sheena Jarvey

Charlie Armstrong and Jeremy Bunnis, also top OSL salespersons at Wal-Mart on the bypass, mentored Travis and he attributes his success to their guidance. Travis explained that Charlie and Jeremy taught him that during the sales pitch you absolutely have to know what you are talking about. Do your research and be sure of the product you are selling. Be honest. Travis is so grateful to both Charlie and Jeremy for their friendship, for sharing their knowledge and for seeing his potential. Travis expressed his gratitude, “Charlie and Jeremy pushed me to do better and I treasure their friendship. When I think of our friendship and the fun and laughs we share, it brings a smile to my face.”

While Travis acknowledges his mistakes and apologizes for the harm that he caused, still he does not regret his life and the path it has taken. Travis is clear that he wants his story told, all of his story, because, “without failure there is no success and so I need to acknowledge the negative.” However, while recognizing the negative, “I’m not looking at things negatively anymore. I see the ripple effect due to my selfishness. What I’ve endured and my failures help to turn small victories into greatness. And all this has molded me into what I am today.”

Travis is no longer intimidated by any negativity or labels. Travis is already well aware of the labels society has placed on him: addict, junkie, felon, gay, criminal, etc. These are adjectives that may have meaning for others, but Travis knows he is gloriously himself. “I want people to know I have torn off the label I had put on me because of my addiction and lifestyle.” Prior, these labels angered Travis and created resentments. But with his new perspective, he realized he doesn’t have to be mad at the world because of stereotypes. Travis saw his anger was only hurting him and he has since found freedom from the negativity of social judgment.

In fact, Travis wants to be clear on the importance of not being judgmental and not being quick to label. He offered this advice, “Don’t judge and don’t label, because life and people will surprise you. Accept people for who they are, not who or what you think they are.”

Travis embraces who he is. He never builds himself up by putting others down. Let others hate and name call, Travis’s journey is one of acceptance and caring. Having more abundant love for himself means having more love for others. “I love myself and I have found myself. I embrace who I am. I’m not here to impress anyone. I don’t have to be that society standard.”

Travis is looking forward a future career as a Certified Nursing Assistance, a field where he can help others and give back to the community. He stated his purpose will be realized in the medical field, utilizing his ability to empathize and care. Travis is a caring person and readily admits he is a people person who finds purpose and gratification in helping others. “One of my favorite moments is when I can turn someone’s day around.”

Travis is a man at peace with himself and looking forward to his future with a quiet confidence and joy. Travis now defines himself by the positivity he puts out into the world. Helping others will always be a huge part of Travis’s journey. “I’m that friend that will tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. I do tough love.” Travis smiled when he said, “I’m ready to have a responsible, boring life without chaos and without addictions and I want to be financially secure. This journey has also brought me closer to my partner Scott.”

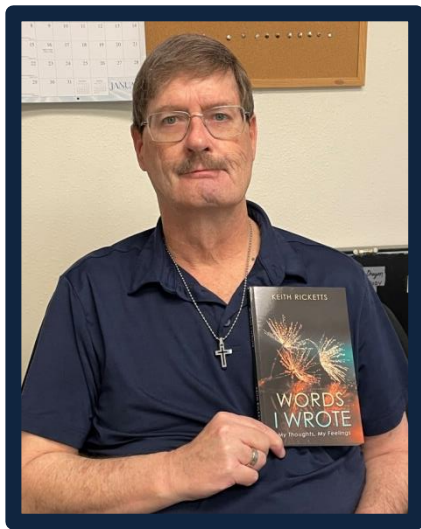
At the end of our interview, Travis offered this advice.

“Just because you have a minor setback, doesn’t mean you can’t have a stronger come back. Don’t dwell in misery-it will consume you. Don’t give up on yourself; instead put a smile on someone else’s face. Because life is only as hard as we make it.”

Travis continued, “I never realized how important small goals were to obtaining big goals. I have accomplished so much since I’ve been here. I have learned to trust enough to ask for help, knowing that my life matters. I wouldn’t change who I am for the world. I know my self-worth. I am being who I truly am and I’m happy.”

We are so proud of Travis and wish him and his family all good things moving forward.

Words I Wrote By Keith Ricketts



Editor's Note: When I found out Keith's book of poems had been published, I asked him to write a little something for the newsletter, and he obliged. Congratulations Keith!

How I started writing: I really didn't know any better; I have always liked to write. Even way back as a kid I really didn't see myself as very good with writing. I started by writing short stories with one of my sisters. I had the attention span of an insect and wasn't good at staying focused. I also enjoyed reading poetry when I was a kid. So writing poetry wasn't that much of a reach. (This is back when there were 3 TV stations, no internet and land lines ruled.)

When and why I started to write: Jr. High was when I started writing poetry regularly. I wrote mainly as a way to express myself. I didn't start keeping anything I wrote until high school. For an English assignment for creative writing I turned in two poems and aced the assignment. My teacher thought they were really good and encouraged me to keep at it. To this day I have copies of those two poems and they are in the book. Both were love poems, and I noticed they were pretty easy to write. From then on, I tried to keep a copy of anything I complete. And I still wasn't keen on letting just anyone read my writing.

Why I started keeping anything I wrote. After graduation I joined the Air Force, and as life became a bit busier, I didn't have the time to sit down and write. But I would get ideas, or think of a line or two. So I started jotting them down...on anything. I wrote a poem one day on an airplane, Banff Airlines. I didn't have any paper, so I used a napkin and managed to write the whole poem out on it. I got into the habit of keeping everything I wrote and I would revisit it later. I still do this to this day.

Keeping a copy and letting folks read: In 1981 I moved into a house with a roommate, and as boxes were being gone through he came across my writing, which at the time was still pretty organized and fit in a few notebooks. He told me I should really think about getting them published because he thought they were pretty good. After that I realized it really didn't matter who read them...as long as I was happy with them. In our discussion I told him about losing more than I had written and he told me to make a conscious effort to keep them. And I did. Now I have journals, notebooks and just pieces of paper, organized kind of. They take up one whole corner of my apartment and lots of space on a book shelf. I may have lost a lot of ideas or poems early on, but now....no. I have words that I have written and go back and revisit them often. Hence the Title "Words I Wrote" because that is usually how a poem starts out.

Writing Style/How I Write: Part of how I write is described above -- jotting something down on paper and getting to it later. I also can sit down and write out a poem in one sitting. The more I think about the subject of a poem, it can become more difficult to write. If I just let my mind clear, words will start to flow, and I just write them down. About 35% to 40% of the time I can get one written in one sitting. About 40% of the time it takes several rounds of editing, and then there are some that take a while to work into something. Unconventional is what my publisher calls my style...I don't stick to any guidelines. I believe my writing comes from my heart....I feel the words more than anything.

When folks read something I have written, the effect I would like to have is an emotional impact, feel the poem. The other effect...is to make them think about whatever the poem is about.

Over the years, some of my writing has disappeared or got lost. And at least one of those poems, I cannot re-create. So now when I finish one, I immediately write it into a note book. I think I am almost to a breakeven point on having as many poems written as ones I have lost. I would guess that I have misplaced or lost about 300 poems, and I have managed to keep a little over 200, not counting what is in the first collection. It took 40 years to finally get this collection published and I still have several more poems to put into future books...don't plan on waiting 40 years for the next one!

Education Center Schedule for the Month of April 2023

Special Note: HiSET testing is conducted on Tuesdays, and TABE testing on Mondays and Wednesdays at GFCMSU. Ed Center hours will be adjusted pending resident registration for testing day and time.

Wednesday 4/12:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 – 0930 and 1530 - 1700
Ed. Coordinator visit to East Campus 0930 – 1100
New Resident Orien., Ed. Center 1300 – 1330
Computer Learning, Ed. Center 1330 - 1530

Thursday 4/13:

Ed. Center Hours 1100 – 1200 and 1300 - 1500
Computer Learning, Ed. Center 0830 – 1030
Ed. Coord. visit to Women’s Campus 1500 - 1630

Friday 4/14:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 – 1030 and 1430 - 1700
Life Skills – **Insurance Strategies**
East Campus Classroom 1030
Women’s Campus Great Room 1130
West Campus Ed. Center 1330

Monday 4/17:

Computer Learning 0830 – 1030
TABE Testing @ GFCMSU 1230 - 1630

Tuesday 4/18:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 – 1200 and 1300 – 1700

Wednesday 4/19:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 - 0930 and 1530 - 1700
Ed. Coord. Visit to East Campus 0930 - 1100
New Oren., Ed. Center 1300 – 1330
Computer Learning, Ed. Center 1530 - 1330

Thursday 4/20:

Ed. Center Hours 1100 – 1200 and 1300 - 1500
Computer Learning, Ed. Center 0830 - 1030
Ed. Coord. Visit to Women’s Campus 1500 - 1630

Friday 4/21:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 -1200 and 1300 – 1700

Monday 4/24:

Ed. Center Hours 1300 – 1700
Open Learning @ GFCMSU 0830 - 1130

Tuesday 4/25:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 – 1200 and 1300 – 1700

Wednesday 4/26:

Ed. Center Hours 0800 – 0930 and 1530 - 1700
Ed. Coord. Visit to East Campus 0930 - 1100
New Resident Orien., Ed. Center 1330 - 1530

Thursday 4/27:

Ed. Center Hours 1100 – 1200
Computer Learning, Ed. Center 0830 – 1030
Staff Meeting 1400 - 1500
Ed. Coord. Visit to Women’s Campus 1500 - 1630

Friday 4/28:

Ed. Center Hours 1100 – 1400
Life Skills – **Interview Strategies**
East Campus Classroom 1400
West Campus Ed. Center 1600
Women’s Center Great Room 1800



**By Allen Heisler,
Education Coordinator**

The FUTURE BUILD PROGRAM might be for you!

Here is a super opportunity at a low cost to open the door to a high paying job. Great Falls College MSU is offering the Future Build Program. The training is only 10 months long. It is specifically for at-risk and re-entry individuals living below the federal poverty line. The training focuses on construction trades and will include hands-on training. Those taking the course will receive the following credits and stackable credentials:



JobSite Ready Construction Basics Micro-credential

OSHA Training Certification

Flagger Training Certification

CPR Training Certification

Work Ethic Training Certificate of Completion

Pre-Apprenticeship Construction Certification

Up to Eight (8) College Credits

The course includes hands-on learning activities in the classroom and at various worksites helping to build Habitat homes. You will learn hand and power tool basics, material handling, blue print reading, plumbing and electrical basics, and construction math. There will be opportunities to engage in rehab repairs, energy efficiency, and weatherization programs, and small carpentry projects.

You will learn about collaborating with other organizations in the community. You will achieve greater self-awareness, learn how to lead effectively, learn how to be a positive voice when faced with diversity, and understand how impactful your involvement can be for systemic change.

Participants work with a case manager to develop strategies to map out short- and long-term goals, wrap-around services needed, and next-step career/educational pursuits. Career Development encompasses assessments for interest and aptitude, career awareness/research, knowledge of local labor market, financial literacy, and time management. Participants also produce resumes, cover letters, engage in mock interviews, can job shadow, and have employment transition opportunities. **Stipends or paid training availability may be explored with each participant utilizing qualifiers partner programs**



If you are interested, contact
Education Coordinator,
Allen Heisler.



Inmate Worker Completes Program and Transfers to Resident

By Brenda Demers



As I visited with **Brian Dolatta**, he explained to me that he is hearing impaired. He was born with a 60 percent loss in one ear and 40 percent in the other. He compensates by reading lips and feeling vibrations. As those of us know that have interacted with people that are hard of hearing, talking louder is not the answer to helping them understand you. Brian explained that normal people hear a conversation at 25 decibels, but he hears them at 105, so all he hears is loudness and feels a vibration. Brian jokingly said, "I've always looked at it as a gift because I have 9 sisters."

Amidst the complicated logistics of Brian's childhood, there was an event that can never be erased from his mind. He witnessed his sister being violated by an adult in their own household. Brian reacted violently to protect her. The scenario played out over and over again in his mind and affected him deeply. He lost all trust in adults and turned to drugs and harming others. Brian doesn't sugar coat any of his wrongdoings. The stable person that entered his life is the father of one of his half-sisters. This savior of a person took in seven children. Only three were his biological children and one was an infant.

Brian was bullied as a kid because he wore hearing aids. Not only that, he described himself as the shortest and the fattest of his classmates. That all changed when he returned from summer break as an 8th grader. His body had changed, so he had the confidence to turn the tables on the bullies. "I've always had a weak spot for the handicapped and disabled. I'm willing to help anyone."

As a youth Brian was big into wrestling and football. He took six state championships in wrestling. He added that he was a straight A student and accepted a scholarship to play football for the Bobcats. The weekend of the bucking horse sale in Miles City he got into a fight and fractured his back. Unable to play football, he lost interest in school and dropped out during his senior year. He reflected, "Sometimes I think back that I shouldn't have dropped out, but if I did I wouldn't be where I am today making the goals I have made."

Life wasn't all bad for Brian. As a young adult he was able to experience traveling to 46 states with his evangelist friend that was confined to a wheelchair. His favorite states are Oregon, Alaska, and the forested area of Pennsylvania, but he said he will always love Montana. He also has good memories of hunting and fishing in Alaska and fishing in the Gulf of Mexico with his uncle.



Brian commented that with incarceration and time he has made positive changes in his life, although he still struggles when it comes to trusting others. His alone time is his sanctuary, and he finds that he needs it to gain strength to be around people. "I've admitted that I'm my own worst enemy. I have a journal and when I get stuck



Brian Dolatta - continued

By Brenda Demers

I'll write down all the negative stuff that goes through my head --*I'm not good enough. I can't. I don't deserve.*

Then on the other side I write the positives and all I can do to overcome and prove myself wrong. Journaling has helped me a lot." Brian added that he has finally found a doctor and a counselor he can talk to which has helped a lot.

Brian's artistic talent was evident beginning at an early age, so learning to bead came easy during his prison stint. Beading blossomed into a passion that augments his creativity and ability to coordinate colors beautifully. Most people just print patterns from the internet or copy them from a magazine, but Brian makes his own using grid paper.

Brian's life is now focused on paying it forward. "For all of the wrongdoing I've done in my life, I can't do enough to pay for it." He loves teaching others sign language and beading. He has a goal to open a hobby shop where youth can do arts and crafts. Brian pointed out that oftentimes kids turn to drugs because there is nothing else to do. He firmly believes a hobby shop would help the youth have a better, successful life and stay out of the system. "Anyone can have a hobby. It doesn't have to be artistic. It can be collecting coins, putting together a puzzle, or cooking. People should figure out something they enjoy doing and that's what they should make their career so they can get paid to do what they like." Brian plans to do just that and get his HiSET while he is here so he can pursue his lifelong goal to be an electrical engineer.



Brian closed with, "Most people don't realize this, but everybody is their own worst obstacle. In order to overcome it and have a successful life, you must recognize when it's happening and push past and fight it. I fight myself on a daily basis. That's why I have a journal to express all of my negativity and what I am going to do to overcome it as well as all of my positives. Anyone that grew up in a bad childhood has a lot of negativity and won't push back. You will always doubt yourself, but the only way to succeed is by making mistakes and to keep on trying."



Residents: You are encouraged to submit something for the next newsletter - a drawing, poem, song, article, quote, advice, etc. Please turn it in to the CO desk with your name or contact Brenda. Any suggestions are also appreciated.



PRE-RELEASE PRESS

Editor: Brenda Demers



**TRANSITION
CENTER**
GREAT FALLS PRE-RELEASE SERVICES INC.

Jessica Mattson - Honors Member



Welcome to new Honors member Jessica Mattson. Jessica is stepping into a new life upon release. After a long term marriage, she will be living alone for the first time in her adult life which, she admits, will be challenging, as it will involve, “a lot more change than I bargained for!” She and her ex are definitely on friendly terms, but life, addictions and other problems made it impossible for the marriage to continue. However, it’s often true that being good friends is better than a bad marriage, and Jessica and her ex are good friends and supportive of each other. “We want each other to be happy and succeed.”

While living alone will be new, still, Jessica is looking at the up side. “Although it has been hard and the relationship I had is gone, I am better off. I’m looking at a clean break and a fresh start and now I can build from the ground up.”

Jessica can already see there will be times of loneliness, but knows she will have to both support herself and ask for support. Jessica, however, is excited to succeed as she begins life as a more independent person.

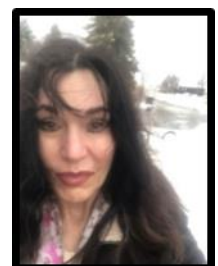
Jessica is currently a health care aid at Meadow Lark Assisted Living. Jessica stated, “I’m happy there. My residents are so encouraging. They count down the days until I’m out of the Center!” However, she is quick to note, “I won’t leave them when I release. My co-workers and my residents are so supportive. I assist with showers, personal care, meals, etc. But the best part is to sit and chat.” Kudos to Jessica. Kudos to her for being the kind- hearted care facility staff that goes the extra mile to make meaningful personal connections to enhance lives.

Jessica has a degree in Medical Assisting. She explained this degree is like an LPN, but more versatile and includes extensive management skills. Adding to her skill set, Jessica is also a registered phlebotomist. She said one of the best parts of the medical care field is that it is never boring and there is always something new to learn.

Jessica’s kids are a bitter sweet topic. She misses them terribly and her greatest hope is to have a relationship with them in the very near future. In the meantime, they are with her sister in law and Jessica is extremely thankful for the care and love her sister in law gives her kids. Although this is difficult, Jessica was looking at the big picture when she said, “My sister in law is giving my kids a good life and I am so grateful to her.”

There is another person Jessica would like to recognize with gratitude. Twenty years ago, Ellen R. was a resident at the Pre Release. Now, in addition to chairing meetings, Ellen is Jessica’s sponsor. They are just getting to know each other, but already Jessica can tell Ellen will be an awesome source of support and insight with establishing clear boundaries and moving forward with recovery.

When she first arrived at the Center, Jessica’s program got off to, as she described it, “a bad start. I was missing appointments.” Being placed as an SB 63, however, where a phase up is not even necessary, Jessica could have been released, once she straightened out her earlier missteps, with running an average program. In other words, the only thing the program asked of Jessica was that she complete a decent program and leave. But, Jessica began to ask so much more of herself. Jessica tasked herself with running a good, clean and solid program and hitting all the markers that she had set up to accomplish. Why the extra effort? Jessica explained, “I need to validate myself to be proud of myself.”



Jessica Mattson - Honors Member – continued

By Sheena Jarvey

Jessica continued to explain: “You have to want it. This program is easy if you want it. It’s only hard if you make it hard. It’s not hard to be here. Just follow the rules.”

Jessica is most definitely her own person and is definitely more than capable of living as a strong, independent woman. She is a practical, can-do person who builds BMX bikes. Anything outdoors is where Jessica likes to be including kayaking, biking, horn hunting, hiking etc. Her career and her clients are always in her heart, as are her kids and all those she loves.

Her SB 63 placement may have only asked that Jessica be ordinary, minus any major errors of judgment. But Jessica did the program one better. She didn’t want to be ordinary. She asked a lot of herself, she set high standards, and the results were so worth it. Jessica stated, with well-deserved pride in her achievement,

**“To be able to hit Honors. It’s an accomplishment. I didn’t have to, but why not try?
Because I’m capable of doing really well.”**

Jessica has set high standards for herself, to put herself on a path to success. We are so proud of the capable and accomplished person Jessica is and wish her all good things moving forward.

A Little of This and That



Danni Altenburg and Annabeth Cuchine sporting their St. Patrick's Day get-up



Devin Braulick donning his one of a kind leisure suit



Beau Avidiya beaded these bracelets under the tutelage of Brian Dolatta



Jason Hannesson (Center) needed some peer support for the picture with his new Carhart jacket from Fast Car Wash. He is pictured with **Rusty Friend** (Left) and **Kacey Gessner** (Right).

JEFF'S TRIVIA, SCIENCE, AND SAFETY CORNER

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT

Throughout the years I have always tried to learn something new every day. I have a few things that I had to research this month to keep up with my own personal challenge.

For instance:



1. The Middle Ages (500-1500 AD) may not have been as smelly as first believed!

For decades, it was historically assumed that the typical towns and hamlets were a sanitation nightmare. This “history” was most probably based on Victorian articles which perpetrated this accusation in order to make the population believe that they were so much better off than those folks in the 1300’s.

In fact, numerous written sources show that the city councils in European cities took charge, especially toward the late 1300s and into the 1400s and tried to legislate cleanliness within their cities. A historian and professor at the University of Stavanger, Dolly Jørgensen, has researched waste disposal in Scandinavian and Northern European Medieval cities. Jørgensen has documented that. Tax was collected to fund street sweepers. Those who dealt with ‘night soil’, the privy and latrine cleaners, collected human waste on a regular schedule. Laws were enacted to level fines on people who polluted rivers or ditches. Animal dung and other waste had to be hauled to dumps or at least somewhere outside of town. Piling up waste on the streets was prohibited. Some cities had rules for when butchers were to cart off their waste, and they could have a daily deadline when fishmongers had to clear away their mess from the street.

They tried to have butchers and any craftsmen who produced dirty waste relocated where they would not be so offensive.



2. More Than One English King Has Died On The Toilet.

King Edmond “ironside” of England was stabbed while on the toilet in 1016.

George the II of Great Britain collapsed shortly after attending to his “close stool” possibly died of an aortic aneurysm.



In fact, over 20 rulers and notable people over the years have been found dead in their bathrooms. Several of the more notables, like King Edmond, were more vulnerable while doing their “business” that at least 7 were assassinated while on their own personal throne. By the way:- One unfortunate Chinamen, Duke Jing of Jin (Ju), died falling into a toilet pit.

Just thought you may want to know some things.

Be Safe

Summer of 581 BC	Jin, China	Duke Jing of Jin (Ju)	Unknown	Died falling into a toilet pit.
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Jeff Barnhart

FUN & GAMES

Out in the fields

Can you find these things in the big picture?

STRESS DIET

BREAKFAST:

- 1/2 Grapefruit
- 1 slice Whole Wheat Toast
- 8 oz. Milk

LUNCH:

- 4 oz. Lean Broiled Chicken Breast
- 1 cup Steamed Zucchini
- 1 Oreo Cookie
- Herb Tea

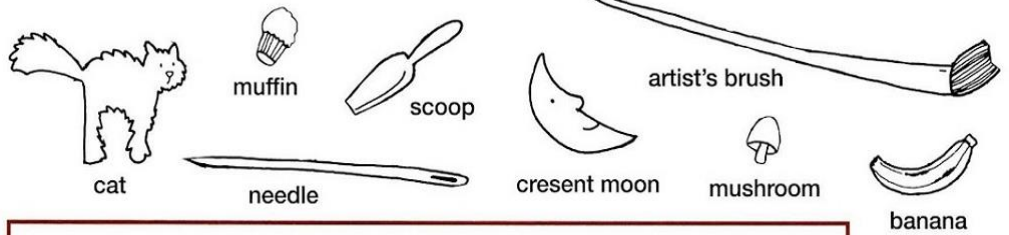
MID-AFTERNOON SNACK:

- Rest of the package of Oreos
- 1 quart Rocky Road Ice Cream
- 1 jar Hot Fudge

DINNER:

- 2 loaves Garlic Bread
- Large Pepperoni and Mushroom Pizza
- Large Pitcher of Pepsi
- 2 Milky Way Candy Bars
- Entire Frozen Cheesecake eaten directly from the freezer

Violet M. Taylor



- button
- toothbrush
- glove
- sunglasses
- rabbit
- sock
- American football

SUNNY STREET

