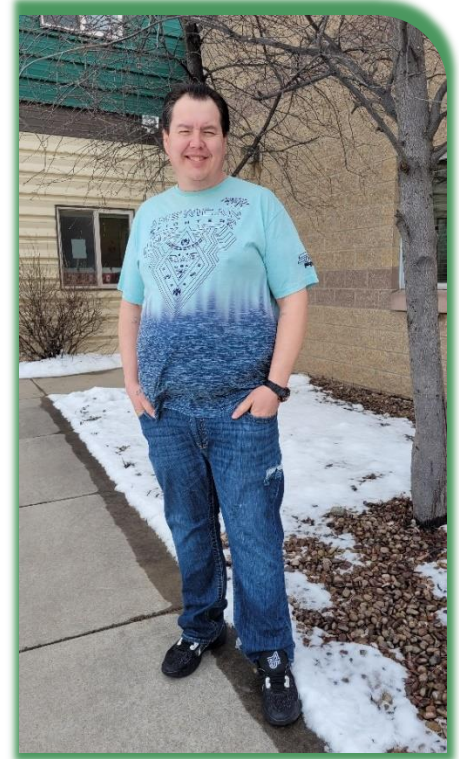


# Resident Standouts

## Percy Monroe

Although he has only been here for a little over a month, Mr. Percy Monroe (right) has made an immediate and positive impact. From the start, he approached his responsibilities with determination, quickly adapting to expectations and working hard to complete everything asked of him. He has demonstrated a strong work ethic, which has allowed him to make steady progress in a short amount of time. Mr. Monroe maintains a consistently positive attitude, which contributes to a productive and encouraging environment. His optimism and work ethic have been greatly appreciated.



## Morgan Quinones-Velazquez

- I would like to nominate West Campus resident Morgan Quinones-Velazquez as a standout. Morgan is making positive changes and successfully completed his program. Nice work Morgan!



## Wayne Kelsay

Congratulations are in order for Mr. Wayne Kelsay (left), our newest member of the Honors Program. Wayne sets a wonderful example for taking accountability and holding himself to high standards. He has put in the work and is prospering in his career of choice. We look forward to your continued success!



# Spotlight on Jason Swanson

By Brenda Demers



For Jason Swanson, learning to control his emotions has been one of the most important lessons of his life.

“I used to respond to negativity with negativity,” he says. “If something irritated me, I’d snap and let my anger show. I was an angry teenager.” Today, Jason works hard to approach situations differently. Instead of letting his emotions control him, he focuses on controlling his attitude. “Someone else doesn’t get to dictate how I feel. My attitude is something I can always control.”

At the Connections program, Jason learned about emotional regulation and reflecting on the consequences of his past actions. “When I look back, I realize how much I’ve lost because I didn’t control my emotions. I don’t want the same things to keep happening over and over again. I want to learn from my mistakes the first time.”

One of the biggest motivators in Jason’s life is his daughter. She was only seven months old when he went to jail and is now a little over two years old. Thinking about her future helps guide his decisions today. “My goal is to get back on my feet and create a safe environment for my daughter.”

Jason grew up in North Carolina and spent the first 20 years of his life there. Some of his favorite memories are summer trips to the beach. “We went to Myrtle Beach every summer. As a kid, it was the best thing ever,” he recalls with a smile. Today, he still enjoys being outdoors. In the summer, he loves anything on the water—wakeboarding, boating, and fishing. In the winter, he enjoys snowmobiling.

After graduating from high school, Jason joined the carpentry union, following in the footsteps of his stepfather, who was a framer. He started in residential construction and eventually moved into commercial work. “The union provides great benefits—401k, health, dental, vision, and life insurance. When you’re young, you don’t always think about those things, but they matter.”

At one point, Jason even started his own company. While many people think owning a business means freedom, he quickly learned the reality is different. “Everyone thinks it’s cool to be the boss, but it’s stressful. You work from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed. It can really strain your relationships.”

This is Jason’s first time in a pre-release program, and although the transition wasn’t easy at first, his perspective has changed. “When I first got here, I wasn’t happy about being an Inmate Worker. I was supposed to be an extended stay. But now I’m glad I buckled down and did it. I proved to myself that I could do it.”

Jason has worked hard to follow the rules and to stay focused. He is respectful and does what is asked of him.

He also understands that moving forward won’t be easy. “Sometimes it’s actually easier to go back to jail,” he admits. “In jail, everything is taken care of—laundry, food, no bills, no responsibilities. It’s not the most comfortable environment, but in some ways it’s easier. Being law-abiding and building a life on the outside—that’s the hard part.”

Jason knows how quickly things can change. “I’ve never made it five or six years without some kind of criminal issue. You can build yourself up and then in one split second throw it all away.”

In the past, going to jail didn’t feel like a big deal to him. “Everything I had was replaceable,” he says. “If I were in a relationship, we’d just break up. I never had kids before.” But becoming a father changed his perspective. “Now my actions affect other people. That was a big eye-opener for me.”

Along the way, Jason has also learned an important lesson about control. After a painful divorce, he struggled to understand what he had done wrong. Eventually, he realized that he can only control his own actions—not anyone else’s. “That’s something I still work on. Sometimes you just have to let things go.”

Today, Jason is focused on building a different future. “I don’t want my child to see me angry,” he says. “I want her to see me happy.”

Congratulations to Jason Swanson for completing the Inmate Worker program and transferring to resident status!



## *The Golden Rule Prevails*

Training for staff is a high priority here at the Great Falls Pre-Release Center. Last month, Program Manager Charlie Martin provided staff training in Professional Boundaries in Corrections. Professional Boundaries in Corrections is about maintaining safety, security and ethical standards at all times. The GFPRC takes a step further in discussing how conversations occur among staff members, residents and community members. How we all treat each other is very important and helps create a professional and respectful atmosphere at the center.



We are all humans and have bad days, but we ALL must remember that when at work and interacting with each other, we always treat each other the same way we want to be treated, this being respectful and being professional.



## No One Is Coming to Save You — But You Can Still Win This

You're out of prison, but you're not free yet.

This program has rules, schedules, job requirements, and zero tolerance for repeated mistakes. If you mess up enough, you don't just get a warning — you go back.

Here's the truth most people don't say:

*Stress, exhaustion, anger, and frustration will not excuse bad decisions.*

*You are expected to function anyway.*

*Believing that you outsmarted staff or have gotten away with breaking a rule does not prove intelligence—it may only show that you are not yet prepared for the responsibility that comes with freedom.*



The good news? How you behave — especially when no one is watching — is the one part of this situation you **can** control.

### Your Body Is Under Pressure

You may notice:

- Poor sleep
- Constant tension
- Irritability
- Brain fog
- Headaches or stomach issues
- Feeling wired but exhausted

Nothing is “wrong” with you. Your system is on high alert. But, pressure doesn't make decisions for you.

**YOU DO!**



## Sleep Problems Can Sink You Fast

New environment + stress = poor sleep.

Lack of sleep leads to:

- Missing alarms
- Being late
- Short temper
- Careless mistakes
- Falling asleep at work

No employer or program accepts “I was tired” as a reason.

So, **do the basics anyway:**

- Cut caffeine later in the day
- Go to bed on time even if you don't feel sleepy
- Get up when the alarm goes off — no bargaining
- Stay off your phone before bed

Discipline beats motivation every time.

## Your Mood Is Not a Good Decision-Maker

You may feel angry, anxious, or numb. That doesn't mean you should act on these feelings.

Most returns to prison don't happen because of one huge crime.

They happen because of small rule violations that stack up:

- Talking back
- Skipping steps
- Missing appointments
- Not following instructions
- “I didn't think it mattered”

**It matters.**

Short-term relief can create long-term problems. Use your wits about you to break the cycle for yourself.

**RN Hunter**



## Comfort Can Be a Trap

Too much caffeine, sugar, nicotine, or junk food can make you feel worse, not better:

- Anxiety spikes
- Mood crashes
- Poor sleep
- Less patience
- Less control



# The Treatment Team Expands Their Impact

The Center would like to extend its congratulations and appreciation to one of the newest members of the Treatment Team, Cassandra Hall. Cassandra has been with us for a little over a year now and has been a part of the foundation for expanding the reach of the Center's programming into the community. We aim to help support individuals who are on their path to leading a more productive and fulfilling life. Cassandra was gracious enough to share with us a little more about her experience and how it led her to us.

## What is your background and in what ways has it led you to the Pre-Release?

I have always had a penchant for helping others, which is what led me to pursue a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice with a focus in advocacy. During one of my courses in college, there was an assignment on a facility in Arizona (my home state) which proved to be a turning point for me as it showed me the direction I wanted to take when I completed my degree. The facility in Arizona focuses on rehabilitation and reentry as pieces of a larger picture to lower rates of recidivism, which is something that is so important to me. Finding a facility in Great Falls where rehabilitation and reentry are at the pinnacle of what is done here is so valuable and I am happy to be a part of that. As far as what led me to GFPRC, I actually interviewed for a CO job and my name was passed along to the Program Manager to interview for a different position. The rest, so to speak, is history. I could not think of a job I would enjoy more than where I am. It aligns with exactly what I want to do as a career.



**Thank you to our resident attendees:**  
(left) Aaron Julian and Levin Johnson; (below) Kevin Ameline, Jory Hamre and Jordan Thompson

## What have been the most challenging parts of breaking into your position as the Treatment Specialist and our new Community Programming? What has been the most rewarding?

While there has not been much I have not been able to handle, there was a lot of training that I had to complete once I was hired to be able to



facilitate groups, so this part was time consuming. Also, learning how to put into practice what is being taught in those trainings can be challenging. Sheena has been a great help. I sat in on a lot of her groups when I was still learning the ropes. I have also gotten guidance from co-facilitating groups with quite a few other group facilitators and I have also learned something from each of them. As far as community programming goes, it was an all-new program and with anything that is new, there is a learning curve. But, I feel like I have adapted well and made the necessary changes and improvements for the program along the way. The most rewarding part for me is seeing people thrive and do well and absorb what they are learning and then watching them apply what they have learned and move forward in life.

**What experiences from your past have helped you the most in your current position?**

Experiences from my past that have helped me the most in this position is my ability to be adaptable. This stems from moving around a lot due to various circumstances in my life. My time in the military also plays a huge role in how adaptable I am. It heightened my attention to detail, which has proven to be a great skill to have on a professional level. I am also very organized, which has been a huge strength for me because I facilitate a variety of in-house groups as well as the community groups, so being organized has helped me tremendously. I am also a good communicator, which has helped me a lot as well. All of these attributes I have are gained from experiences in my past and are really invaluable as far as I am concerned, especially professionally.

**Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself or about how your position is contributing to the success of people in the community?**

I think that the biggest thing I bring to my role is consistency and a genuine belief that people are capable of change. I do my best to create an environment where all feel supported, but where everyone begins to understand the importance of being held accountable and recognizing the impact their choices have. In my position, I contribute by helping individuals build skills they can use moving forward in their lives. I also do my best to meet them where they are at, while focusing on growth, moving forward and holding themselves to a higher standard. If I can play even the smallest role in helping someone successfully reintegrate and reduce their chances of returning to the system, then I know I am making a positive impact not only on the individuals but the community as a whole.



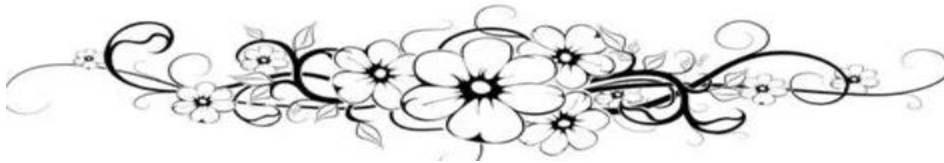
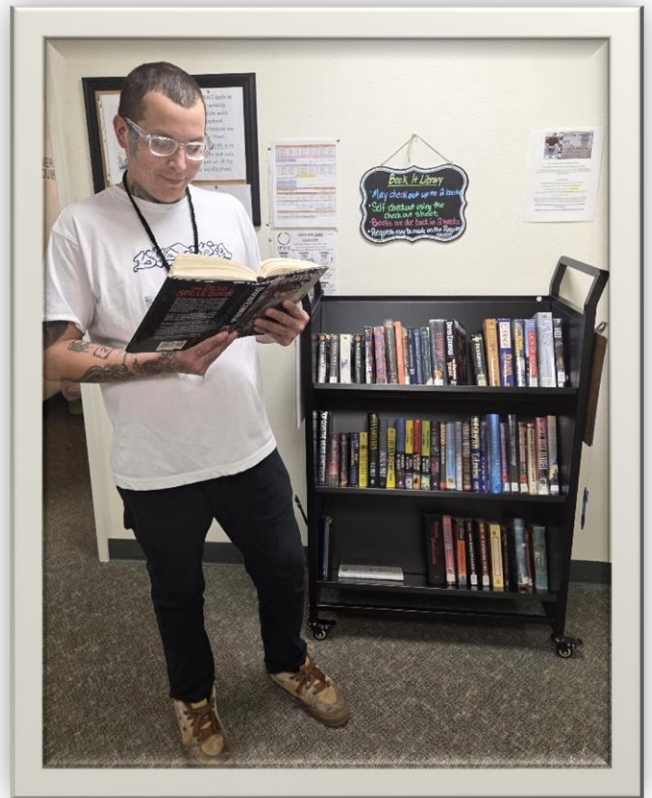
# Book It Library

East Campus is happy to introduce its own little library- Book It Library. The library is available to all East Campus residents and will be open Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 0800 to 1700 and 1100 to 2000 on Thursdays. Book It Library is located in the basement on East Campus near the CTS offices. Book It will use a self-checkout system with residents being able to take out up to two books at a time for up to two weeks. Requests can also be made if someone is looking for a particular genre, title, or author.

## You're Invited!

The **Book It Library April Reading Challenge**: read a book...

1. That has an author's name beginning with M
2. With a green cover
3. With a one-word title
4. Over 400 pages



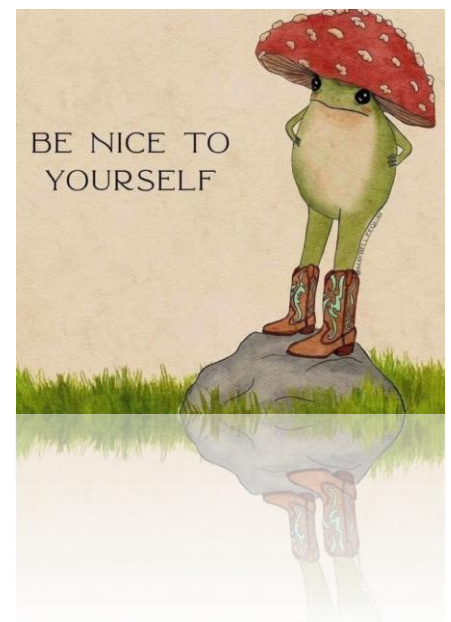
## Tidbits from Your Editor

*By Sonja Roberts*

Spring is a time for new beginnings, but also a time for reflection. Everyone learns and grows differently and at different paces. Give yourself a pat on the back from time to time and remind yourself of how far you've come.

One thing that you can do to keep yourself in tip top shape for continued growth and development is to get enough quality sleep. Scan the QR code below for an informative and useful article on "The Ultimate Guide to a Better Night's Sleep" from the knowledgeable healthcare providers at Everyday Health ([www.everydayhealth.com](http://www.everydayhealth.com)).

*To your health!*



# Ray's Trivia and Fun Facts to Know Spotlight

March, named after the Roman god of war Mars, was originally the first month of the Roman calendar and, with the vernal equinox, signals the start of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. It is known for unpredictable "lion/lamb" weather, the start of Daylight Saving Time, and as a busy period for hibernating animals.

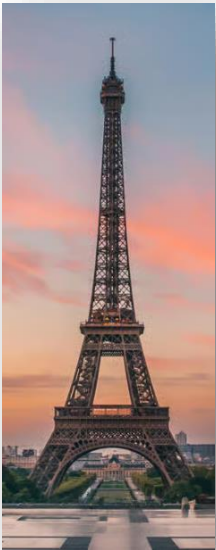
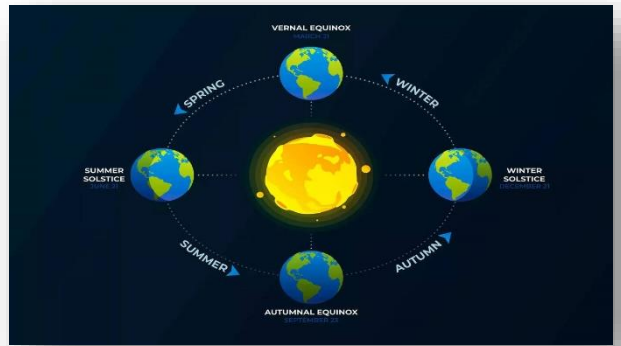
**Original New Year:** In the early Roman calendar, the year began in March, not January.

**The Ides of March:** March 15th was traditionally a deadline for settling debts in Rome, but is most famous as the day Julius Caesar was assassinated.

**Name Origin:** March is named for Mars, the Roman god of war, because it was the time to resume military campaigns.

**Important Inventions:** The telephone was patented by Alexander Graham Bell on March 7, 1876, and the game Monopoly was invented in March 1933 – One of my favorite board games. I must be a poor sport because my daughter says "you are the worst" when I win.

**Eiffel Tower:** The Eiffel Tower was completed on March 31, 1889.



**Space & Time:** March 14 is Pi Day, celebrating the mathematical constant pi ( $\pi$  (3.14)), which represents the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter.

**Equinox:** The vernal equinox, marking the start of spring, occurs around March 20–21, resulting in equal day and night lengths.

**Unproductive Month:** Statistically, March is often considered to be an unproductive month in the US due to the distraction of "March Madness" basketball.

**Birthstones:** Aquamarine (symbolizing courage) and Bloodstone.

**Birth Flower:** The Daffodil.

**Zodiac Signs:** Pisces (until March 20) and Aries (starting March 21).

**Famous March Birthdays:** Albert Einstein (March 14), Vincent van Gogh (March 30), Dr. Seuss (March 2).



**St. Patrick's Day** commemorates the 5th-century patron Saint of Ireland, Patrick, who was kidnapped from Britain as a teen, enslaved in Ireland, escaped, and later returned as a missionary to convert the Irish to Christianity. Celebrated on March 17th, it combines historical tales of his faith with folklore like shamrocks and banished snakes.

**The Legend of Patrick:** Born Maewyn (though known as Patrick), he was captured by Irish raiders at age 16 and spent six years as a shepherd in Ireland. During this time, he grew closer to his faith before escaping back to Britain. He later claimed a divine vision commanded him to return to Ireland, where he brought Christianity, established monasteries, and famously used the three-leaf shamrock to explain the Holy Trinity.

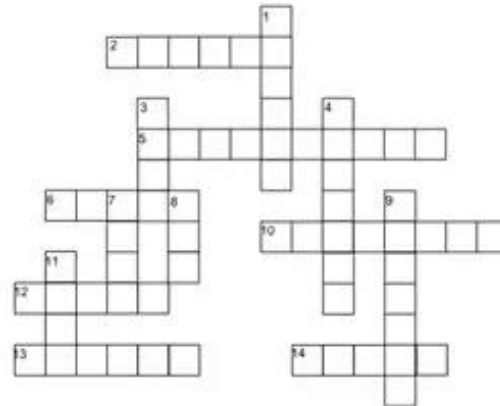


Ray McClelland

# Fun and Games



## Saint Patrick's Day Crossword Puzzle



### Down:

1. According to Irish lore Saint Patrick drove these out of Ireland
3. St. Patrick was initially associated with this color
4. This city dyes its river green every St. Patrick's Day
7. St. Patrick's Day occurs during this major Catholic holiday
8. The circle in the very center of the Celtic cross represents this celestial body
9. Saint Patrick used a three-leafed Shamrock to explain this religious concept.
11. Dublin hosts a huge festival on Saint Patrick's Day that lasts for \_\_\_\_\_ days

### Across:

2. This was Saint Patrick's real name.
5. This is a small mischievous sprite as per the Irish folklore
6. Some believe that Saint Patrick was born in Scotland and others think that he was born in \_\_\_\_\_.
10. This is the national flower/emblem of Ireland.
12. This is what an Irish potato cake is called
13. St. Patrick was the first bishop of \_\_\_\_\_
14. Saint Patrick's Day commemorates the \_\_\_\_\_ of Saint Patrick.



www.MyPartyGames.com

**Not fun and games:** If you are having trouble finding a service provider to help file your taxes, please access this link at the IRS. They have options for filing your taxes for free in some cases and you can be sure that the provider is following all of the rules.

<https://www.irs.gov/file-your-taxes-for-free>



### PRE-RELEASE PRESS

Editor: Sonja Roberts



TRANSITION  
CENTER  
GREAT FALLS PRE-RELEASE SERVICES INC.

Residents: You're invited to please submit a drawing, poem, song, article, quote, advice, etc. for the next newsletter. Turn in to the CO desk with your name or contact Sonja.

sonja@gfprc.org 455-9324

Text only line: 406-290-8407