

Louisiana Department of Corrections

INSIDE OUT

Keeping Loved Ones Informed



A Message from the Secretary



The temporary suspension of visitation in January due to the increase of COVID cases was a disappointment on many levels but especially for incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. I'm very happy to say that the surge was short-lived, and the prisons are now able to safely reopen to pre-COVID operations, including reinstating visitation, programming, and volunteer opportunities, and for the first time in two years, the Angola Prison Rodeo will take place this April.

With the worst of COVID hopefully behind us, we've begun to focus on other initiatives that will improve the daily lives of our incarcerated individuals. The groundbreaking for the new state-of-the-art facility for Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women should take place in the coming months, which will allow the female population to be located in one facility that can focus on gender-specific programming and care.

Some additional exciting news is that the Department of Corrections is in the process of installing air conditioning in assisted living spaces in state prisons. The Department has also just been funded to develop the structural plans for air conditioning all spaces in state facilities. Once completed, we believe these plans will be approved and we will receive the full funding to execute this project.

We've also begun to focus on more in-depth training for correctional officers to help enhance the way officers communicate with incarcerated individuals. We've partnered with the Crime and Justice Institute to provide training that teaches correctional officers a number of approaches they can use in their day-to-day interactions that have been shown to increase the effectiveness of rehabilitative services.

I hope you all get the opportunity to spend time with your loved ones in the upcoming weeks. Although we've recently experienced some difficult times, things are starting to look up.

Secretary James "Jimmy" Le Blanc

This Issue

MacArthur Fellow Donates Libraries
Page 2

Using Technology
Page 3

**DOC Hires Falcon Group
LCIW Receives Donation**
Page 4

**Crime and Justice Institute
Implements Training**
Page 5

Visitation Reopening
Pages 6

**Angola Rodeo
Regulation Update**
Page 7

RCC Graduation
Page 8

**Noteworthy Accomplishments of
People in Prison**
Pages 9-10

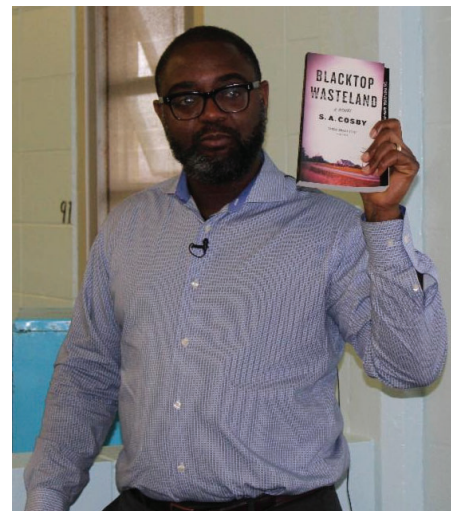
**Frequently Asked Questions
Legislative Update**
Page 10

Helpful Resources
Page 11

MacArthur Fellow Donates Libraries to Two Louisiana Prisons

The national non-profit, Freedom Reads, opened two Freedom Libraries in prisons across Louisiana, one in Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, the state's oldest and only maximum security prison, and one at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center.

The libraries, the brainchild of 2021 MacArthur Fellow Reginald Dwayne Betts who was sentenced to nine years in prison at age 16, seek to create a space in prisons to encourage the full realization of self and the exploration of new possibilities. These will supplement the prisons' existing libraries by providing 24-hour access to hundreds of books in portable libraries set up within the dorms at the two prisons. Betts's nonprofit aims to build 1,000 Freedom Libraries in prisons across America. Books in the Freedom Library have been carefully curated through consultations with thousands of poets, novelists, philosophers, teachers, friends, and voracious readers, resulting in a collection of books that are not only beloved, but indispensable. The libraries include contemporary poets, novelists, and essayists alongside classic works from Homer's *The Odyssey* to the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, that remind us the book has long been a freedom project.



"The Louisiana Department of Corrections shares our goal of creating opportunities for daily engagement with literature inside their facilities, and we are grateful for the quickness with which the agency's leadership embraced this partnership," said Reginald Dwayne Betts, Founder and Director of Freedom Reads. "With the opening of two Freedom Libraries in Louisiana State Penitentiary and Elayn Hunt Correctional Center, we have a chance to contribute to another chapter in the history of incarceration here in the South – one that is about mercy, hope, and creating opportunity for self-reinvention inside. I know firsthand how literature empowers us to confront what

prison does to the spirit, and that inspiration in the form of reading and writing is a gateway to a new future for those inside prison and a way for those outside to get beyond the dehumanizing stereotypes of those of us who have served time."

"I had the opportunity to see Dwayne at a conference not too long ago, and I was so impressed with his presentation and the work he is doing with Freedom Reads," said Secretary Jimmy Le Blanc, Louisiana Department of Corrections. "We are excited about expanding reading opportunities and 24-hour accessibility to the portable libraries in the dorms. This donation means so much to our population as it will help broaden their horizons through reading. We're hopeful this will help improve the educational level of those who take advantage of this gift."

About Freedom Reads:

Founded by Reginald Dwayne Betts, who knows firsthand the dispiriting forces of prison, Freedom Reads works to empower people through literature to confront what prison does to the spirit. Supported by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and inspired by the recognition that freedom begins with a book, Freedom Reads supports the efforts of people in prison to transform their lives through increased access to books and writers. For more information about Freedom Reads and the Freedom Libraries project, please visit <https://freedomreads.org/>.

Using Technology to Educate More Effectively

This article was adapted from an article previously published in *The Walk Talk*.

Elayn Hunt Correctional Center's (EHCC) Education Department thrives on effective teaching measures, including the recent integration of touchscreen Promethean boards and lessons from Boardworks, a software program with a library of interactive resources to enrich academic learning.

The Promethean board is very similar to a digital whiteboard but includes more features and capabilities. Mrs. Ellen Floyd, one of the teachers at EHCC is excited about this new addition. "The Promethean Board can access all computer programs on our computers," Floyd said. "It has premade flipcharts and lessons with instructional content and practice."

Jeremiah Gavlinski, a prison tutor at EHCC, praises the addition of the Promethean board for motivating his students. "When teaching math on the Promethean board, students are drawn out of their seats, inciting them to interact with the lessons," Gavlinski said. "Excitement of the new technology energizes lessons to a whole new level."

Before the addition of the Promethean boards, EHCC used document cameras with projectors and computer programs on laptops. Although these devices were useful, it was still challenging for teachers and tutors to teach adult students. Angelo Golatt, an imprisoned academic tutor at EHCC, described the Promethean board as next-level technology. "In a typical education setting, a teacher would use manipulatives (i.e. blocks, models, etc.), but those things are not appropriate for adult learners," Golatt says. "The screen gives students the opportunity to use their hands to aid in the learning process. When this technology is coupled with other teaching methods, an instructor can address all three major learning styles (audio, visual, and kinesthetic) with relative ease."



The students and teachers are enjoying the new devices, and they are taking full advantage of the many features the board offers. "Students enjoy using this device," Floyd says. "It gives them the opportunity to interact outside the textbook. They can work with other students in screenshare mode. It breaks up learning."

The tutors are grateful for the addition because it gives them a technological boost to help their peers get an education. "Now we have the ability to work through software as a group," Golatt says. "We can save lessons and examples for future use."

The Promethean boards allow students to actively engage in their own learning process, which fosters interaction and provides students and educators the opportunity to use up-to-date technology. Quinten Moran, an academic tutor, is excited about the new addition and how it contributes to the effectiveness of teaching. "The addition of the Promethean Smartboard has helped educators and students to be more engaged in the educational objective," Moran says. "I'm a better tutor because of the addition of the Promethean board."

DOC Hires Falcon Group to Assess Mental Health Practices in Prisons

The Louisiana Department of Corrections (DOC) recognizes the need to continuously evaluate and improve mental health practices. DOC has enlisted the consulting services of the Falcon Group (Falcon) to conduct a comprehensive examination and systems analyses of varying components of DOC's Mental Health, Behavioral Health, and Psychiatric Care System. Falcon partners with government and community stakeholders to advance correctional mental health services, impacting recidivism. The Falcon team aims to take behavioral health services to new heights, ensuring its utmost potential by delivering real, sustainable results for County and State jurisdictions.



The scope of Falcon's analyses at DOC includes general mental health services for the entire DOC population as well as services and treatment for those with serious mental health illnesses. Falcon will consider mental health services at every stage of imprisonment, from intake and evaluations to discharge planning and community reintegration. Falcon will provide DOC with a comprehensive list of mental health care enhancements for state facility services.

Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women Receives Donation of Feminine Products from Thurman Perry Foundation

Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women (LCIW) received its first monthly supply of organic cotton feminine hygiene products from the Thurman Perry Foundation in February. Foundation Founder and Executive Director Gabrielle Perry presented LCIW Warden Kristin Thomas with the first delivery. The foundation provides resources to incarcerated women and girls. This generous donation will provide each individual at LCIW with a monthly supply free of charge on a continual basis in addition to standard issued menstrual products provided by DOC.



DOC Partners with CJI to Provide Correctional Officer Training

In general, correctional officers often spend more time with incarcerated individuals than any other staff member, and as such have the opportunity to be a source of positive influence. In order to have this positive impact, correctional officers can benefit from training in Core Correctional Practices, which teaches a set of skills based on extensive research proven to increase the effectiveness of rehabilitative services. Since 2017, the Louisiana Department of Corrections (DOC) has partnered with the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) to provide technical support in a variety of areas, including the Justice Reinvestment Initiative and direct training of staff, including correctional officers, probation and parole officers, and community resource coordinators. The most recent project has been to provide training to correctional officers on best practices for communication with the prison population.

The Crime and Justice Institute bridges the gap between research and practice with data-driven solutions that drive bold, transformative improvements in justice systems. They have built a reputation of innovative thinking and unbiased issue analysis. After CJI provided technical assistance on DOC's Justice Reinvestment Initiative, DOC again partnered with the organization to implement the Core Correctional Practices Training for correctional officers.

This initiative teaches correctional officers a number of approaches they can use in their day-to-day interactions. For example, one communication skill that can have a positive impact is role clarification. Incarcerated individuals interact with many different people on a daily basis, and the different roles those people play may be confusing at times. Role clarification teaches correctional officers to verbalize their position and responsibilities to incarcerated individuals, which can lead to a better understanding of the individual's surroundings, a stronger sense of what is expected of them, and fewer conflicts that arise from confusion.

The training gives correctional officers the vocabulary for practices that may seem intuitive to some. For example, another tactic that can be beneficial for correctional officers to understand is effective use of authority, which is when correctional officers point out the choices available to incarcerated individuals and what the advantages and disadvantages of each choice would be. This provides individuals with a chance to pause and consider every option. It allows for time where a potentially emotional situation can deescalate.

This training covers several strategies that can improve communication between incarcerated individuals and correctional officers. The initial training took place at the Baton Rouge Headquarters on March 8, 2022. The training will continue on May 10-12, 2022, when CJI teaches DOC employees how to implement this training in the future at the Train-the-Trainer event. This is in preparation for making this a permanent part of correctional officer training.

These strategies have been proven to have positive effects on the prison environment. It provides opportunities to verbally deescalate some dangerous situations, reduces disciplinary issues, creates a better understanding and rapport between correctional officers and incarcerated individuals, and reinforces long-term behavior change, which lowers recidivism.



Face to Face Again

DOC Returns to Pre-COVID Visitation Operations



Robert Handy and family at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center during visitation

As of Friday, April 15, 2022, The Louisiana Department of Corrections (DOC) resumed pre-COVID visitation operations in state-run prisons. Maintaining in-person connections with loved ones is critical to a person's success in prison, and visitation is essential to strengthening these connections.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is not required to participate in visitation. At all institutions, visitors must be on the incarcerated individual's approved visitation list in order to participate in visitation. For the visitation schedule, contact the individual institution.

Paula Handy, who was visiting her son, Robert Handy, at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center (EHCC) said, "It feels so good to have a contact visit with my son. It's been two years since I had a chance to see my son and touch my son since the pandemic. His grandmother and I would visit with him every week before the pandemic. Four months ago, his grandmother died, and not only was he not able to attend the funeral, but it was hard today being here without her. I am so grateful for the Department opening up and allowing me to visit with my son."

Erwin Thibodeaux, who was visiting his son, Michael Thibodeaux at EHCC agreed, saying, "I'm so happy. As a matter of fact, I was here Monday, and now I am back today on Sunday to see him again. That should let you know just how happy I am to have a contact visit with my son again. Just to be able to sit here and chat with him, because I love him and I miss him. This is a great opportunity and I hope it continues."

For information regarding visitation schedules, contact the individual institutions. Contact information is below.

Institution	Contact Number	Hours of Operation
Allen Correctional Center	(337) 389-6029	Monday-Friday, 9-11:30 a.m. & 1-3:30 p.m.
David Wade Correctional Center	(318) 927-0400	Monday-Friday, 8:30-11 a.m. & 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Dixon Correctional Institute	(225) 634-6291	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Elayn Hunt Correctional Center	(225) 319-4559 or (225) 319-4364	Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.
Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women	(225) 319-2324	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Louisiana State Penitentiary	(225) 655-2343	Monday-Friday, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.
Rayburn Correctional Center	(985) 661-6380	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.
Raymond Laborde Correctional Center	(318) 876-2891 ext. 268	Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m.



Ted Alexis and family member at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center during visitation



Michael Thibodeaux and his father at Elayn Hunt Correctional Center during visitation

Angola Rodeo to Take Place for First Time in Two Years

Following a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Angola Prison Rodeo is back Saturday and Sunday, April 23-24, 2022, offering the best in prison rodeo excitement! Warden Tim Hooper invites the public to view the wildest rodeo show in the South. Watch as Angola cowboys compete in heart-stopping events like Convict Poker, Wild Cow Milking, Bull-Dogging, and the world famous Guts-n-Glory. The gates to the prison open at 8 a.m., and the “Wildest Show in the South!” starts at 1 p.m.

The rodeo offers an opportunity for family and friends to spend time with their imprisoned loved ones outside of regular visitation. Imprisoned individuals also get to sell items they have made while in prison and share their talents with visitors.

Tickets are \$20.00, and all seats are reserved. ONLY Rodeo Tickets will be sold. NO separate Arts and Crafts Tickets will be available.

You are encouraged to come early to hear outstanding bands, feast on a wide array of the South’s best food, and shop unique and affordable arts and crafts, including jewelry, leather crafts, paintings, woodwork, lawn and garden furniture, and toys, all made by incarcerated individuals.

Tickets can be purchased in advance online at angolarodeo.com, or by calling (225) 655-2030 or (225) 655-2607, 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m., Monday-Friday. Rodeo proceeds assist with the funding of cutting-edge reentry programs, which work to lower recidivism.

All COVID restrictions have been lifted. Everyone is welcome to attend. For more information, visit the rodeo's website at angolarodeo.com.



Department Narrows Sanctions Regarding Visitation and Phone Calls

As a part of the Louisiana Department of Corrections’ (DOC) ongoing efforts to maintain and strengthen a person’s connections with loved ones while in prison, changes have been made to the Inmate Rulebook and Sanctions Grid. Specifically, restrictions on visitation or phone calls may only be used as a possible sanction for a rule violation where the underlying facts involved in the rule violation relate directly to phone calls or visitation. For example, if someone is found guilty of smuggling contraband into prison from a visitor, restrictions on visitation may be a possible sanction. The Department recognizes the value that maintaining connection with loved ones has on addressing behavioral issues, and therefore restrictions should only be limited in narrow circumstances.



Rayburn Correctional Center Holds Graduation Ceremony

On Tuesday, March 29, 2022, Rayburn Correctional Center held its annual graduation for incarcerated individuals. Assistant Warden Karla Wheat delivered the opening remarks. Pastor Shane O'Hara, Executive Director of Team 5:18 gave the keynote speech. Bachelor's and Associate Degrees were conferred by Ms. Kimberly Evans of Ashland University. Technical Degrees in Automotive Technology, Building Technology, and Welding Technology were conferred by Dwayne Lambert, Dean and Dr. Daniel Roberts, Vice Chancellor of Northshore Technical Community College. Warden Travis Day congratulated the individuals on their accomplishments and expressed his appreciation to the dedicated academic and vocational instructors for a job well done. In all, 67 certificates were awarded.

Three incarcerated individuals earned Bachelor's Degrees from Ashland University.

Four incarcerated individuals earned Associate Degrees from Ashland University.

Nine incarcerated individuals completed the Automotive Technology Program from Northshore Technical Community College.

Thirteen incarcerated individuals completed the Building Technology Program from Northshore Technical Community College.

Twelve incarcerated individuals completed the Welding Technology Program from Northshore Technical Community College.

Twenty-six incarcerated individuals earned HiSET certificates.

Congratulations Graduates!



Noteworthy Accomplishments of People in Prison

Tamika Starks



Tamika Starks was first incarcerated during August of 2010. In her years of incarceration, she has learned that rehabilitation is a choice. She realized you can go through the motions and take all of the classes, but deciding to be a different person takes work and commitment. Starks believes the moment she took responsibility for her actions, her narrative changed. She has completed Culinary Arts, ServSafe, IC3, General and Private Pesticide Applicator Certification, and various additional CTRP classes. She has taken pride in being a tutor in vocational classes, and she will graduate this year from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Both Starks and her daughter applied for a scholarship from The Thurman Perry Foundation in 2021. The foundation recently announced Starks as one of the 15 national scholarship winners. She is the first incarcerated woman to be awarded this scholarship.

Starks says, “Regardless of one’s physical location, the trajectory of an individual’s path is determined by setting boundaries and establishing order and structure.” She continues to see the light at the end of the tunnel when she can return home to her children and grandson. She wants everyone to remember, “Each sunrise presents a second chance.”

Darryl Waters

As one of the original participants in the Reentry Court Sentencing Program, which began in 2010 at Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP), Darryl Waters is currently the longest serving lead mentor. Since arriving at the prison in 2001, Waters has dedicated himself to helping others. Through participation in the LSP Fatherhood group, which provides parental skills and familial relationship classes, he’s made an effort to be a part of his three children’s lives.

Prior to becoming a social mentor for the program, Waters worked for KLSP, the prison’s radio station, staffed and operated by incarcerated individuals, and he graduated from the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Program in 2007. Among his many contributions is helping organize a tutor workshop for educational instruction.

In his role as a mentor, Waters focuses on building trust with the mentees, most of whom are younger men hoping to learn a vocation that will not only serve as an alternative to incarceration but provide a long-term career as well. “You’re in a setting where everything has calmed down. Watching television, playing chess and cards, a bonding time of sorts. But the guys watch us and test us to see who they can trust. They want to share but in confidence. They’re no different than we are,” Waters said. “We don’t want everybody knowing our struggles and heartaches. But once you gain their trust, they are willing to open up. It’s nice to be able to counsel others so they are able to handle situations in a more appropriate manner.”



Continued on Page 10

Waters Continued from Page 9

Waters credits his participation in the program for his leadership and management skills. With much credit given to God and his faith, Waters has always maintained a focus on family and freedom. His efforts to assist the young men assigned to the program are part of his attempt to provide a better path for others. During his time at LSP, Waters has earned much praise and many compliments, but perhaps the most significant is the 2019 pardon recommendation from the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Parole, which is currently pending consideration from the governor. When asked how he maintains his faith and focus, Waters falls back on the phrase he cites to his mentees and tour groups entering the prison: “I just opened the door and let God in.”

Frequently Asked Questions



Each issue of *Inside Out* will include answers to 2-3 frequently asked questions that affect the prison population and their friends and family members.

Q: How can I check on the medical/mental health of a prisoner?

A: Due to confidentiality, release of medical/mental health information is strictly governed by regulation. If you are inquiring about a specific prisoner and are not authorized by regulation to access this information, appropriate release of information forms must be on file, and then only authorized staff members may discuss this information with you. In these cases, you should contact the facility where the prisoner is housed. Please be aware that even in instances where one is authorized to access this information, only general information will be shared over the phone.

Prisoners are oriented on how to access the medical staff 24/7 at the facility where they are housed through established sick call procedures. In serious medical situations, any staff member will assist a prisoner in obtaining medical treatment. Medical staff will make a determination about their treatment.

Q: What is the difference between Probation and Parole?

A: Both parole and probation are forms of supervision under Probation & Parole officers. Probation is a type of penalty imposed by a judge and usually used as an alternative to imprisonment. Parole, on the other hand, is a status with required supervision that occurs after a person is released from prison. The ultimate governing authority for those on probation is the sentencing judge while the ultimate governing authority for those on parole is the Committee on Parole.

Legislative Session 2022

March 14, 2022 - June 6, 2022

The Louisiana Department of Corrections has one priority bill for this session, LA HB223 by Denise Marcelle. This bill expands eligibility to participate in the Reentry Court Sentencing Program to include convictions on additional crimes. For more information on this bill, click below.

[Learn More](#)

Helpful Resources

LA Informational Handbook for Friends and Families of People in Prison

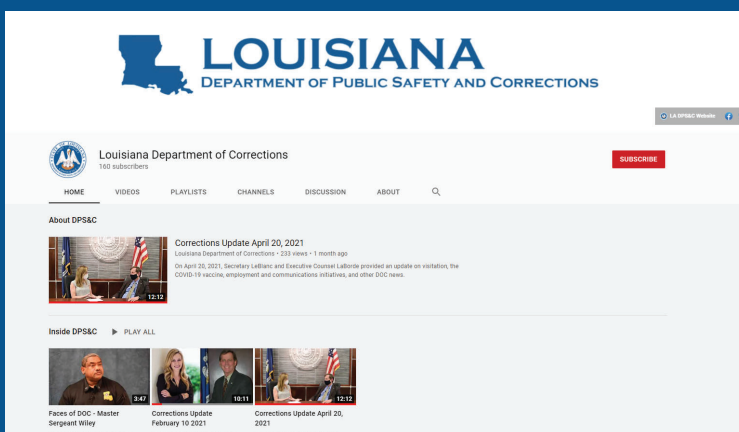


The Louisiana Department of Corrections, with the help of many organizations, creates handbooks to offer advice on navigating the difficulties associated with having a friend or family member who is in prison. You can find them on the DOC website.

[Learn More](#)

You can follow the Louisiana Department of Corrections on YouTube to see helpful information regarding the imprisonment of a loved one, updates from Secretary Le Blanc, success stories of formerly incarcerated individuals, and much more!

[Watch Now](#)



Emergency Resources

If you or a loved one has been impacted by an emergency, you can find a helpful list of emergency resources, which includes information on FEMA Federal Disaster Assistance, Mutual Aid Disaster Relief Network, SNAP and DSNAP, HUD Disaster Assistance, HHS Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and much more on the DOC website.

[Learn More](#)

The Louisiana Department of Corrections Social Media



@Louisiana_DOC



@LaDeptofCorrections



Louisiana Department of Corrections

Follow us for important updates!

To find more resources that could be beneficial to previously incarcerated individuals or friends and family members of currently incarcerated individuals, you can visit:

doc.la.gov

lareentryguide.com

reentryprograms.com/in/louisiana

reentryessentials.org