



Spokane County Detention Services Community Corrections Newsletter

Interim Director Michael Sparber

Geiger Lt. Jason Robison

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Our Mission:

Providing services for adult offenders to enhance public safety through effective and innovative programs supporting positive choices, constructive behavior and accountability, thereby reducing repeat criminal behavior.

Our Principals:

- We believe change is possible, and it begins internally.
- We believe all people are equal and diverse individuals having intrinsic worth who deserve personal attention, support, humor, empowerment and recognition.
- We believe in creating a challenging environment that emphasizes individual growth, exploration and strength.
- We believe in being proactive participants in societal, environmental, political and individual change to promote a safer community.

Virla Spencer Gives Grads The Hard Truth, Offers A Hand Up



Virla Spencer, attorney for Spokane's *Center For Justice*, is active in helping offenders restore driving privileges, have their legal financial obligations reviewed and remove barriers to employment; all elements that reduce the incidence of recidivism.

ry, and no longer has power over you. Your past doesn't define you; it prepares you for where you're going. The two things defining you are your patience when you have nothing, and your attitude when you have everything. Today you're smiling because you have a second opportunity. That second opportunity means nothing if you don't learn from your first mistake. You have to set a plan for this second chance to make a difference. Ten years ago, I never could have imagined myself working for a law firm and overseeing programs. I had a label on my forehead. Some days I had to crawl to make it to the other side. Like you, I've shed a lot of tears and had a lot of heartache to get to where I am today. I know people continue making mistakes. I still make them. You'll keep making them. Don't allow them to define who you are. Look in the mirror, admit your mistakes, and be determined to be better than you were yesterday."

Virla asked each graduate individually how their release this time was going to be different. "You will be challenged, and that's when you must believe in who you are. I know what you have to go through to feed your family, and being incarcerated isn't it. If you keep making the same mistakes, it's self-perpetuating, and soon the Corrections Officers will know your kids' names, too. Let this be the start of breaking your own barriers and ending your family's poverty. Reach out to the resources available to you. I will give each of you my phone number. If it takes reaching out to you or giving you a hand up, I'll be there. But I'm also straight up and I'll call you out on everything. We'll be imperfect together. Many of you also have family support. A lot of people don't, and they end up right back here. If you have a moment where you're afraid you're going to start using again, get on the phone and call somebody for help. If you have faith in God, stand on that faith and allow God to work for you. Now that you are clean and sober, use your time here to find out who you are. Are you clean and sober only because you're in here? Every minute you are clean and sober will be a fight. Surround yourself with people able to strengthen you. If it means coming to my office and allowing us to help you find a job, do it. We don't want to see you back here, so there are questions you need to ask yourself before you're released. If you don't, you'll be right back here, in the penitentiary or in the mortuary. I've seen it time and again. I come today to encourage your heart, but also to keep it real. Are you going to struggle through, or forget what you've learned and return to your old life? The choice is yours."

Geiger Corrections Center celebrated its 69th Breaking Barriers graduating class on May 19th with an sobering address by Virla Spencer, attorney at Spokane's Center For Justice. Virla has been involved with Geiger offenders in the past through her Center For Justice work in Driver Relicensing, LFO restructuring and removing barriers to quality employment.

While congratulatory of their coursework accomplishments, Virla emphasized the work lying ahead for them is difficult. "I have been where you all are at. I was there because of choices I made. When I was down and out and needed somebody to speak life to me, I clenched onto everything. I needed somebody, anybody, to encourage my heart and speak life to me. I thought about my past and the bad things I'd done. My past became my fear and I was afraid of moving forward. 'I'm a felon! I've made bad decisions! I'm a bad parent! I'm not going to be able to succeed!' No. Your past is just a sto-

Geiger Case Manager Ron Cunningham Ready For Next Adventure

Detention Services bids farewell to Case Manager Ron Cunningham, retiring after 30 years with Spokane County. One's first impression of Ron might be that he's good at explaining complicated concepts, he enjoys helping others and he loves life.

Prior to joining Geiger Corrections, Ron worked in law enforcement with the California Highway Patrol and Contra Costa County. He worked with Spokane County Pre-Trial Services following Detention Services lay-offs from the 2008 recession. At Geiger, Ron worked closely with the courts in developing, assessing and implementing offender programs. Ron was an integral member of the long-running Corrections Alternative Review Board (CARB), comprised of Spokane county judges and corrections leaders reviewing custody operations, discussing recent changes to the RCW, fine-tuning logistics and ensuring effective coordination with the courts.

Ron brought his experience to the Spokane Regional Law & Justice Council's Risk/Needs/Responsivity subcommittee a few years ago when the city and county began exploring alternatives to help keep people out of jail while maintaining community safety. Supportive of subcommittee's work, Ron advised assessment tools be used in conjunction with all other pertinent information in assessing a defendant's probability of appearing for court and complying with release conditions, rather than as stand-alone decision makers.

As Geiger Case Manager, Ron researched police reports, counselled offenders toward substance treatment, assessed suitability for Electronic Home Monitoring and Work Release, and monitored for program compliance. That meant either he or his Case Manager partner, Barb McGlothen, were on-call all the time.

Last fall Ron, Detention Services MH team supervisor Kristie Ray and Detention Services instructor Rebecca Butterfield led a group exploring a pilot re-entry framework incorporating IOP addiction treatment, Gordon Graham's Breaking Barriers cognitive reality model, plus a selection of emotional-intelligence and employment awareness courses, integrated into a 12-week format. Planning continues, with the program structure brightly reflecting Ron's contributions.

While Ron dedicated his career to helping those around him—both offenders and co-workers—his most glaring attribute remains an innate fascination of people. An excellent photographer, Ron enjoys RV'ing to scenic locales, being involved in his church's many endeavors and spoiling his new grand-daughter.

Thanks, Ron, for your devotion to the county and the community. You taught us well, be it uplifting troubled offenders toward positive change, gaining compliance from EHM clients or appreciating the crucial elements of a great bagel.



Ron Cunningham (center) shows commemorative badge and watch presented to him at his May 30 Geiger retirement celebration. From left are Geiger Lt. Jason Robison, Ron, Ron's wife Vickie, and their son, Sean. Sean works with Spokane County IT as a systems analyst. Even before starting with the county, Sean built a computer lab used by Geiger offenders for resumes and request-for-interview letters.

Raised Community Garden Beds Target Ground Squirrel Damage



Geiger's community garden has undergone yet another transformation, as inmates continue the quest for a wider variety of vegetables, larger harvests, more efficient irrigation and reduced varmint depredation. The Geiger Garden began in 2011 with four planting plots, affording inmates working in drug and alcohol treatment an avenue to "give back" to the community for their crimes—as part of their cognitive-behavioral therapy.

Over the years, those four beds became 16, all the while local ground squirrels were taking notice. Young, old, big, little; the voracious omnivores all came to forage.

Since mid-March inmates have been busy constructing 2-1/2-foot high garden boxes that sit right on the ground. They're tall enough the ground squirrels can climb up, and they're plumbed with irrigation drip lines. Time will tell, but so far, so good! Thanks to Ziggy's Building Supply for donating lumber for the project. Local food banks and charity kitchens will hopefully be graced with even more vegetables from Geiger this sea-

Electeds Celebrate Geiger's AGC Pre-Apprenticeship Grads



AGC Graduates place a new wall into position at their project house on East 31st Avenue. The house was heavily damaged by an arsonist and it's reconstruction is being organized by Habitat For Humanities.

Geiger Corrections Center graduated its fourth group of pre-apprenticeship trainees on March 27 at Salem Lutheran Church. The offenders were trained by Inland NW Associated General Contractors (AGC) instructor Jesse Wharton through the Headstart To Construction Trades (HCT) program.

Eight AGC graduates completed training in OSHA safety and first aid, construction framing, large equipment operation, roofing, and concrete finishing. Following release from Geiger, each graduate is assisted in applying for local apprenticeship opportunities.

Instructor Jesse Wharton told the graduates they showed double the drive and determination any of the preceding three groups displayed. "Although you've made mistakes that landed you at Geiger, you're right on the edge of turning your life around. Don't let your past mistakes define you; let them refine you. Also remember, you are who you choose to hang out with, so choose wisely."

Superior Court Judge Shelly Szambelan thanked the graduates for succeeding. "People have been watching, and we're excited that

you've done a great job. There were some concerns about having you go outside of the Geiger facility for apprenticeship training, and you not only justified everybody's confidence, you surpassed expectation. Your success serves the future of local re-entry programming well. Remember that you are not the sum of your mistakes. Your accomplishments are what make you who you are."

Spokane City Councilor Breean Beggs encouraged the grads to get started right away after release on lining up interviews and finding work. "You've set yourself up to enter a profession that has a lot of demand right now in Spokane. I'm excited to see what you're going to build as you come back into the community. You each are sincerely are one of us. Welcome back!"

Spokane Police Chief Craig Meidl told that, as a person of devout faith, God has special a place in his heart for those who've struggled. "We all have critics. I have them. We find them even in our own families. However, it's not the critic that counts. The credit belongs to the person who's in the arena with a dusty, sweaty face; who actually does the work. The critic knows neither victory or defeat. You have been in a battle and you've won. Be inspired by that to continue fighting and winning. We are here for you."

Superior Court Judge Annette Plese regularly attends offender graduations, noting they signify what's right about the community and criminal justice. "Whether it's Breaking Barriers, substance treatment or AGC, our judges and elected lawmakers are all on board with your efforts toward positive change. What you have accomplished inspires us in the courts. Remember this moment and use it as motivation when you are challenged--and you will be challenged. One of those challenges will be meeting your legal financial obligations. Write a letter to the Superior Court clerk asking that those obligations be reviewed. There is new legislation that could make a difference to you. You will get a letter back from either Judge Szambelan or me. Your job in finding work and making ends meet will be a challenge, too. When I was in law school, it was hard and it was a lot of money. Several times I got to the point of asking myself, 'Why?' Fortunately, I stuck it out, and thank you for sticking it out. Working six weeks in the cold on your project house might have seemed like a long time when you were first staring out, but it ended up going by fast. Keep your momentum going."

City Council President Ben Stuckart noted 14 elected officials present at the graduation. "You won't see 14 of us together anywhere else. Not at a ribbon cutting or any particular meeting. That should give you a sense how important we feel you and offender programming is to the community. You hear elected officials and people in the criminal justice system talk a lot about smart justice and offender programs, but you eight graduates are living it. Save today's program, and somewhere down the road when you're challenged to maintain your progress, go down the list and call these leaders. They are all willing to help; they believe in your accomplishments. One of the reasons this program exists is because of Judith Gilmore. Judith announced her retirement two or three graduations ago, but she can't seem to let go. Not even with a broken leg. That's because she believes in the program and in you. Judith, thank you."

AGC training director Mike Ankney replied to President Stuckart that after Judith broke her leg and began rehab, there weren't many emails from Judith. "We knew she was getting better when her long, eloquent emails started coming more frequently."

Spokane Mayor David Condon congratulated the AGC grads, noting they serve as excellent role models for others participating in local workforce initiatives. "Thank you to all the officials in this room for your continued support and advancement of employment initiatives. From 'banning the box,' building employment opportunities for the disabled, or promoting diversity in the workforce, the community is united. Congratulations on your accomplishments. Your next step--landing a job and becoming a valued employee--is the most important. You are set up to succeed."

Treatment Client Has Dry Hopes For New "Thinking" Process



Michael Godley recently completed Intensive Out-Patient Therapy (IOP) at Geiger Corrections under the counsel of CDP Linda Gurtner. Michael completed his sentence without being infraacted for any custody rule violations.

Michael Godley came to Geiger Corrections Center's Intensive Out-Patient (IOP) treatment program in February, following his third alcohol-related driving arrest in 11 years. No longer young but still not old at age 31, Michael tells that alcohol has kept him from achieving important life goals and from being fully immersed in his daughter's development.

Upon release, Michael stated he's looking forward to returning to work, living with his parents at first, and being a parent himself. "She's 13 years old and living with her mom's parents. They've been very good to her, and I get along well with them."

Michael was arrested for his last DUI on Feb. 17. On Feb. 21 he was transferred to Geiger. "I heard about Geiger's IOP program when I arrived here from the jail. I began thinking more about my past, my future, and the future of my daughter. Soon, Case Manager Barb McGlothen told me there was an opening the mid-day group and I was able to get in. On March 21 I was moved from the general population floor with 60 people, down to the Treatment floor having only about 20 people.

"Studying the lessons, completing homework assignments and applying the concepts to yourself are a lot easier on the Treatment floor than upstairs with the general population--it's always very busy up there."

Michael felt the IOP curriculum was excellent.

"The biggest part of IOP is 'Thinking For A Change.' It's a course that has a lot of role playing and analyzing your responses to various statements or situations. Our counselor, Linda Gurtner, was very patient. You could tell she liked everybody and sincerely wanted us to succeed. Well, she was our Treatment counselor until last week, when she stumbled during class and broke her wrist pretty badly. Naturally, everybody in our group was concerned for her. Our group was assigned a new counselor, Terren Beeman, who's fairly young and has bit different approach leading Treatment. He's likable, and like Linda, doesn't rush through questions about the curriculum."

Michael stated that in his IOP studies, he really didn't identify any particular flawed thinking pattern that allowed him to rationalize his alcohol use. "Thinking For A Change showed me that I wasn't thinking at all. It's easy to see when you're sober, but I'd been drinking for so long it didn't even register."

Michael has been one of Geiger's stand-out Treatment clients. Besides helping others on the floor with homework and remaining a positive influence, Michael hasn't been written up for a single rules infraction since he was booked. That's quite uncommon. "I decided that I'm here to better understand myself and my problem, so it's not been difficult to follow the rules. I also completed Ms. Butterfield's Breaking Barriers course. Just like IOP has 'Thinking For A Change,' Breaking Barriers had a segment called 'Conflict Resolution,' that explored the process of decision making. Now, I realize everything I do has consequences beyond me, so I'm thankful to both Linda and Ms. Butterfield for that. They both figured out what connects."

Upon release, Michael is looking to return to work, his daughter and family. "I've done construction work in the past, so I'm anxious to start working again, rebuild family relationships and embrace those who've been wanting a sober me. They are what's driving me to change my life."

**Spokane County
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We're on the web:
[www.spokanecounty.org/
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Newsletter questions,
comments?

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