Director's Message

During this holiday season, we have much to celebrate as an agency. There are examples all over the state, from daily interactions to large-scale programs. I'll share just a few that I think epitomize this season of hope.

As long-time leaders in correctional education, we've developed arguably the nation's best approach to providing post-secondary education to offenders. Our new approach to CCAP marks a shift to address the great epidemic of opioid addiction.

Recently, we've won competitive grants that have enhanced the efforts of our probation and parole officers; promoted better environmental stewardship, and created a one-of-a-kind program that fosters better relationships between offenders and their children.

In early December, we entertained visitors from two different states. They were here to learn about our highly successful cognitive community program.

We succeed in our mission to help people to be better. But what's behind this? What foundation undergirds our success?

Let me suggest the following three simple beliefs.

We believe in diversity. It is the great engine that drives this agency. We accept each other as we embrace our challenges and our mission, and we recognize that a diverse group of people makes better-informed decisions than a homogeneous group. When we bring different backgrounds, experiences, and expertise to the table, we are at our strongest.

We believe in second chances. All of us have made mistakes and found forgiveness. We believe in helping others find new, better ways of thinking and behaving, leading to better choices and more opportunities.

We believe in healing. Our healing environment is purposefully created by the way we work together and treat each other, encouraging all to use their initiative to make positive, progressive, changes to improve lives. It is safe, respectful, and ethical – where all people are both supported and challenged to be accountable for their actions.

In this great season of hope and charity, let me remind you that you are part of something very good, something much larger than any of us. We are all working together for a better tomorrow, bringing positive change and long-lasting public safety. I appreciate the work that each of you does.

May you have a safe, joyous holiday season and a wonderful New Year.

VADOC Grant Successes Hit Unprecedented Level

As the Department of Corrections moves forward in its mission, people hear things – the tremendous expansion of the Victim Services Unit, increases in employee recruitment activity, the web-based substance abuse program at Halifax, the Building VADOC Celebrates Holiday Season by Giving Back

In this time of good tidings, the Department has once again done a tremendous job of supporting our local communities. Well more than half of this newsletter is dedicated to chronicling VADOC's generosity.
VADOC Grant Successes Hit Unprecedented Level

As the Department of Corrections moves forward in its mission, people hear things – the tremendous expansion of the Victim Services Unit, increases in employee recruitment activity, the web-based substance abuse program at Halifax, the Building Family Bridges program that offers improved services for incarcerated parents and their children.

These initiatives came to be in the last three years because of the innovative thinking and hard work of many different people.

As distinct and unique as each of these efforts is, they share one commonality.

They were funded by a competitive grant secured with the help of Grant Administrator Tracey Jenkins.

VADOC has long benefitted from formula funds, grants issued for highly specific reasons, such as the Carl Perkins grant that enriches the Department's vocational education efforts. VADOC has also received grants that are not extremely competitive, such as Victim of Crimes Act funds earmarked to meet the Prison Rape Elimination Act requirements, Ms. Jenkins explained.

More difficult to attain are discretionary grants – the competitive grants.

In this arena, VADOC has made tremendous strides recently, to the great benefit of many.

For instance, the Automated Response Matrix (ARM), which taps into the inmate database to provide an automated consideration of an offender’s risk and needs assessment, would not have been possible without funding from a competitive grant.

“To our knowledge, the use of technology and an automated process has not yet been piloted anywhere else,” said Deputy Director of Programs, Education and Reentry Scott Richeson. “The Department has received several inquiries from other states’ corrections agencies wanting to gain more information. Additionally, we have presented the project at several national conferences to include the American Probation and Parole Association and the Corrections Technology Association,” she said.

Competitive grants awarded to the Department during the past three years total more than $3.2 million. At present, VADOC holds eleven active grants.

Credit for all this goes in large measure to VADOC’s Grant Administrator Ms. Jenkins.
Continued: Grant Successes Unprecedented

“These big grants can really be transformative for a state agency like ours,” said Dean Ricks, Director of Administrative Compliance. “These competitive grants allow our staff to help offenders in ways they wouldn’t be able to otherwise, thereby impacting reentry and increasing our chances of seeing successful outcomes.”

VADOC’s recent competitive grants include:

- Building Family Bridges – helps strengthen the relationship between offenders and their minor children (To learn more click here.)
- Staff Recruitment – promotes correctional officers recruitment
- Web-based substance abuse program, located at Halifax Correctional Unit – initiated in 2016 to help offenders with substance abuse issues (To learn more click here.)
- Residential substance abuse treatment – helps offenders at Rustburg Correctional Unit with substance abuse issues
- ARM - improves community-based supervision efforts (To learn more click here.)
- Composting expansion – expands composting to a number of facilities (To learn more click here.)
- Victim Services Unit expansion – expands victim services to add regional advocates. (To learn more click here.)

As Grant Administrator, Ms. Jenkins works with all VADOC units to identify grant opportunities and develop responsive applications. Upon award of a grant, Ms. Jenkins works with project managers and financial units to ensure that projects are in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and conditions. Ms. Jenkins notes that “a grant is a contract. When we accept an award, we agree to implement the project we proposed and abide by a number of laws, regulations, and conditions. This can sometimes seem overwhelming, especially to someone who has never worked with a grant. Therefore, I work with each project manager, providing technical assistance and support throughout the life of a grant.”

For those seeking to learn more about obtaining a competitive grant, VADOC has put a process and procedure in place – 270.1 is designed to aid those seeking grant funds and technical assistance, and guide others as they support external grant applicants.
Lunenburg Doubles Up: Donates to Christmas Angel Tree and Coat Giveaway

Lunenburg Correctional Center participated in the annual Christmas Angel Tree. The Department of Social Services provided Angel tags for children in need. Staff were very generous in providing for them.

Pictured above - from left: Ashley Boyce, Cynthia Coleman, Lt. N. Stokes, Jean Anderson, Major M. Bryant and Warden Larry Edmonds. Seated from left: Brenda Richards, Cynthia Spencer, and Officer Gough.

Lunenburg Correctional participated in its first Christmas Coat Giveaway. Steps Head Start, a day care center in Victoria, submitted a variety of sizes for children in need of coats.

Pictured above - from left presenting the coats: Joyce Gregg and Cynthia Coleman, Lisa Sadler, Steps Head Start Site Administrator and Gloria Lockett, Family & Community Partnership Manager.
Participants in the Messages from Dad were busy in early December creating video for their children. The primary aim is to connect or re-connect, to build or re-build relationships. Messages visits 14 Virginia prisons, serving at least 50 offenders at each facility. VADOC’s Carolyn LeCroy founded the Messages from Mom and Dad program in 1999 after her own incarceration. For her efforts, Ms. LeCroy was named a CNN Hero in 2008. To see the related video, click here.

Keen Mountain Collaborates with Buchanan County to Spread Holiday Cheer

Keen Mountain Correctional Center collaborated with the Buchanan County Department of Social Services to provide Christmas gifts for a family of eight – including the mother and father and six children. The family was very appreciative of the gifts and Keen Mountain Correctional Center staff went above and beyond to provide this family with a Merry Christmas.

GRCC Sends Messages from Dad

Participants in the Messages from Dad were busy in early December creating video for their children. The primary aim is to connect or re-connect, to build or re-build relationships. Messages visits 14 Virginia prisons, serving at least 50 offenders at each facility. VADOC’s Carolyn LeCroy founded the Messages from Mom and Dad program in 1999 after her own incarceration. For her efforts, Ms. LeCroy was named a CNN Hero in 2008. To see the related video, click here.
Little more than a week before Christmas, members of Atmore’s CTSU helped Richmond Friends of the Homeless. They raised over $300 and fed more than 80 people. Richmond Friends of the Homeless feeds people at two different locations in Richmond and another group canceled out due to the weather. But CTSU’s leader Rick Davis declared, “We are VADOC - we’re tough - we don’t cancel out!” He offered special thanks to Jackie Williams, Kartik Yadav, Shelia Crenshaw, and all who brought cookies.

District 42 Franklin Adopts a Needy Family for Christmas

The staff at District 42 Probation and Parole, Franklin, adopted a family for Christmas coordinating with the Southampton County Department of Social Services’ Angel Tree project in Courtland. In the picture below, staff are preparing the Christmas box for the family. Chief Mary D. Mason and Senior PPO Sabrina Tann, right, coordinated the effort.
Counselor Charlene Randolph, right, recently organized an Angel Tree Coat Drive at Nottoway Correctional Center. Employees were encouraged to pick an angel for whom to purchase a winter coat, hat, scarf, or gloves. Nottoway Correctional Center collected 100 coats to be donated to the Steps Head Start Program in Nottoway and Lunenburg counties. Warden David Call offered his appreciation all employees who donated to this worthy cause. Pictured above, from left: Destiny Johnson, Allison Lewis, Warden David Call, Charlene Randolph, Jodi Clark, Joann Royster, and Sampson McCargo are pictured with the donated coats.

Coffeewood Initiates Food Drive

Coffeewood Correctional Center initiated a food drive to benefit the needy people of Culpeper County. Officers and staff worked with the Culpeper Department of Social Services to collect 10 complete Christmas dinners plus various other food items which were also donated. Some lucky children also received toys and games donated by Coffeewood staff. “We worked closely with the Department of Social Services to make sure that these items were distributed to people who would appreciate them and enjoy them,” Lt. Erica Mullins, who helped coordinate the effort.

Special thanks to Coffeewood’s Officer Mack, Investigator Butler, Warehouse Staff Motley, Operations PST Lawson and Lieutenant Mullins-Nibblins for their assistance.
‘Tis the Spirit of Giving in Sussex

Sussex II State Prison teamed up with the Sussex County Office of Children’s Service to brighten the holiday for 27 local children. The gifts included clothes, bikes, coats, dolls, and loads of other toys. A great big THANK YOU to the employees of Sussex II for being so generous and opening up your hearts to bring joy to those in need during this Holiday Season!

On the upper left are OIT Daughtery, OIT Smith, OIT Weaver; Human Resources: Alexandria Boone, Natasha Cheatham and Vernita Boone.

In the upper middle picture are: Business Office: Sherri Hatch, Charlene Scott, Mike Magee, Rosa Boyd; Capt. Williams

Lower middle: Officer Hollis and Accountant Charlene Scott

Sussex I State Prison Senior Correctional Officer Merylee Perry, above, brought some holiday cheer to the workplace with her colorful decorations.
Atmore Swings into the Season; HR Sings the Twelve Days of DOC

Various members of Atmore’s Human Resources Unit regaled HQ with their own version of a holiday song – “The Twelve Days of DOC” – featuring Lu Davis and Laverle Talley, lower left and lower middle, with Angie Jones directing. Others who joined in the activities included Director Harold Clarke, upper right, and Peter Grigsby and Trudy Montagnoli, lower right.
District 1 Richmond Brings Santa Claus to Town

District 1 Probation and Parole joined with several community partners on December 17 to provide holiday joy for the children of several D1 clients. Activities during the Third Annual Christmas Extravaganza Family Reunification included a visit from St. Nick, who gave presents to about 50 Richmond area families. At lower left are Jocelyn Smith and Jason Smith entertaining a young guest. At lower middle, Officers Cara Mellanson and Sherla Hendricks speak to the crowd, while at lower right, Deputy Chief Ty Richardson stands with a portion of the gifts. District 1’s partners for the event included Toys for Tots, Johnson’s Charities, M.A.Y.A. Foundation, Project Give Back to the Community, Helping Hands, and VADOC/VCU Security Care Unit.
Wise Correctional Unit Helps Brighten Coeburn’s Holiday

The holiday season rang in a little brighter in Coeburn this year because of the efforts several residents of Wise Correctional Unit. The town's unique set of pedestrian bridges are adorned with lighting and decorations put in place by the offenders from Wise.

This is not the first time Wise Correctional Unit has helped promote Coeburn. In early 2017, the town unveiled an over-sized rocking chair befitting the mythical woodsman Paul Bunyan. “These projects are excellent opportunities for our men. They are very skilled and grateful for the opportunity to give back to their communities, said Wise Correctional Unit Superintendent Lafayette “Fate” Fleming.

Photos Courtesy of Belcher Images.
Healing Environment in Practice: Wise Correctional Unit Steps Up to Help One of Its Own

As part of the healing environment effort, Wise Correctional Unit and other members of the VADOC family recently came to the aid of one of their own by holding a T-shirt fund raiser. The sale of the colorful red shirt featuring #PAMSTRONG emblazoned across the front went to benefit Farm Manager Pam Shell, who for several years has managed several projects including Wise’s apple orchard and more recently its fish husbandry operation. The T-shirt’s front and back are shown below. The monies raised have helped Ms. Shell deal with expenses related to a medical emergency. In the family picture at the left, Ms. Shell is seated at the lower right.
Wallens Ridge State Prison adopted “Christmas Angels” and dropped off the gifts at Norton Department of Social Services.

Some people like holiday decor. Many employees decorate their doors with colorful ornaments. Some go further, such as CTSU’s Chris Thomas, left, whose office decorating efforts included a light show.

Staff at Virginia Correctional Center for Women, top, and Lunenburg Correctional Center participated in the Tacky Sweater Day on December 19.
River North’s Community Relations Fund Donates Money to Local Schools

In mid-December, River North Correctional Center’s Community Relations Fund donated a check in the amount of $3,134.45 to Grayson County Public Schools.

Grayson County Public School Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Susie Funk received the funds which will be divided among the four K-5 schools in the county for purchase of classroom supplies.

Independence Elementary, Fries Elementary, Fairview Elementary, and Grayson Highlands will receive funds. Each principal will be able to utilize the funds where needed in their schools. Ms. Funk and the principals were very appreciative of the money received for these schools.

Pictured left from left: RNCC Principal Kimberly Phipps and Assistant Superintendent of Instruction Susie Funk.

In Case You Missed It:
VADOC on YouTube, Social Media and more!
Florida, Delaware Come Calling: Cognitive Community Programming Attracts Visitors

Corrections professionals frequently visit Virginia to learn about the Department’s success. Interest generated nationally by a series of articles about Virginia recently brought two different sets of corrections professional to Virginia.

Those articles, posted by In Public Safety, stressed the importance of the cognitive community in helping VADOC register the lowest recidivism rate in the nation.

In early December, the Department entertained guests from Florida and Delaware.

The contract providers for the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice took special interest in the cognitive community program for possible replication in juvenile facilities. In their one-day visit, they toured St. Brides Correctional Center and later lunched with a variety of VADOC corrections professionals.

The Delaware visitors spent two days learning about VADOC’s cognitive community reentry model. The first day at St. Brides Correctional Center they toured the reentry program, talked with staff and met with offenders. They noted that the offenders were proud to explain their community, to display what they’ve learned and what they know about cognitive behavioral programming and reentry.

The next day the Delaware corrections professionals visited Greensville Correctional Center attending a morning meeting with offenders in the cognitive community. The visitors exchanged ideas with the population and enjoyed the atmosphere and program’s strong sense of community.

“It was great to share what everyone finds to be successful about the cognitive community, said Cognitive Programs Manager Jessica Lee. “It was great that staff and offenders could meet with our guests and tell them about things first hand and how the program contributes to lasting public safety,” she added.

Links to the articles, (click on the title):
- How the VADOC has Reduced Recidivism Using the Cognitive Community Model (August 1, 2018)
- Changing Offender Thinking and Behavior Through the Cognitive Community Model (September 19, 2018)
- Challenges Implementing, Maintaining, and Replicating the Cognitive Community Model in Corrections (December 7, 2018)
Lunenburg Correctional Center welcomed a surprise guest to its recent Cognitive Community graduation ceremony. Director Harold Clarke attended the December 7 event joining Deputy Director of Programs, Education and Reentry Scott Richeson in congratulating 67 graduates.

Cognitive Community offenders are within six months of release. The cognitive community program gives offenders the tools, information and instruction to facilitate their successful reentry into society.

Marty Jackson, a former resident of LCC, served as the keynote speaker, and delivered a message in keeping with the event's theme of “Soaring to New Heights.” Warden Larry Edmonds offered welcoming remarks.

Music was provided by various offenders. Following the graduation, offender families visited with their loved ones and enjoyed light refreshments.
There is STILL Time to Sign Up for the Virginia Beach Polar Plunge!

Here’s the whole schedule - right through to the summer!

**Virginia Beach**
Date: February 2, 2019
Location: 3001 Atlantic Ave.
Virginia Beach
VADOC TEAM is registered as LETR TRUE BLUE
Team picture is at 12:30 p.m. on the ocean side of the tent.

**New River**
Date: February 23, 2019
Location: Dudleys Landing at Bissett Park
Radford
VADOC TEAM is registered as LETR TRUE BLUE
TEAM picture is at 1:30pm adjacent to the boat launch.

**Tim’s Rivershore Plunge**
Date: February 23, 2019
Location: 1510 Cherryhill Road
Dumfries
Info coming @valettrueblue on Facebook

**Mosiac Plunge**
Date: January 19, 2019
Location: 2910 District Ave.
Fairfax
Info will be released on @valettrueblue on face-book

**Richmond Solar Plunge**
Date: Summer Games
Location: University of Richmond
Info will be released on @valettrueblue on face-book

*Side note from Captain James Shantz:*
Correctional uniformed staff needed for opening ceremony to the state Summer Games held at the University of Richmond. June 7th, 2019. Point of contact is Captain James Shantz. jim.shantz@vadoc.virginia.gov
On November 2, 2018, Director Harold W. Clarke authorized the reorganization of the Division of Administration. Effective immediately, the Division will conduct formal business operations within the following reporting structure:

The Division of Administration, under the direction of Deputy Director Joseph W. Walters, is proud to serve the Department of Corrections and the Commonwealth as we work to make Virginia a safer place for all citizens.
Catch VADOC in the News!

Prison guards injured after inmate attack: Two guards at a maximum security prison in Virginia are recovering after being attacked by an inmate. The Virginia Department of Corrections said two officers at the Red Onion State Prison were attacked early Sunday.

Virginia prison guards injured after inmate attack: One officer received puncture wounds to his upper body and another appears to have a broken knee. The department said a 31-year-old inmate appeared to have used a homemade weapon.

Crime commission endorses fixes for missing fingerprints: The Virginia State Crime Commission endorsed roughly 20 recommendations Monday aimed at ensuring fingerprints are collected and submitted properly.

DOJ Grant Aims to Reduce Recidivism by Strengthening Families: The Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) is launching a new project aimed at improving services for incarcerated parents and their minor children.

Challenges Implementing, Maintaining, and Replicating the Cognitive Community Model in Corrections: In 2003 and 2006 respectively, the Virginia Department of Corrections began two pilot programs (one male and one female offender group) to evaluate the potential of the Cognitive Community model.

Combating Recidivism in 2018 and Other Ongoing Challenges in Corrections: “Many of the ongoing challenges faced in the field of corrections will need continued dedication, determination, and dialogue as we enter the new year.

Death sentences and executions continue falling across Virginia and U.S.: It has been seven years since a death sentence was imposed in Virginia, and the state’s death row population, which once hovered near 60, is down to three inmates.

How Virginia’s opioid epidemic motivated VADOC to explore medication-assisted treatment: VADOC’s program involves the use of Vivitrol, an FDA-approved non-narcotic that prevents the euphoric effects of opioids and reduces cravings.

Do you have a story idea for the newsletter (or IDOC)? Please contact Win Sisson at george.sisson@vadoc.virginia.gov or call (804) 887-8072.