

# AROUND CORRECTIONS

Official Newsletter of the  
Virginia Department of Corrections



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Editor Win Sisson

## Director's Message



As I sit to prepare the message for this edition of our newsletter, the weather forecast is calling for another day of sweltering heat and humidity in the Commonwealth. I, however, am not complaining. All winter – with its cold temperatures, heavy snowfall, sleet and freezing rain - I looked forward to warmer days in beautiful Virginia.

I'm pleased to say that while the temperatures are rising outside, the energy inside the VADOC is also heating up thanks in part to a number of developments that showcase the progressive nature of the organization.

Recently, the Council of State Government's Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) awarded the VADOC with the prestigious State Transformation in Action Recognition (STAR) Award, recognizing our efforts to allow offenders in Virginia's prisons to be eligible for college credit in five career and technical courses. We are the nation's only correctional department to hold the American Council on Education's College Credit (ACE) recommendations which further demonstrates our commitment to assist offenders as they prepare to reintegrate into the community. The SLC, which is comprised of 15 states, received 30 nominees for this year's STAR Awards. The

**“More than a dozen state DOCs have sent delegations to Virginia to study what we are doing to maintain the Commonwealth's position as a leader in corrections.”**

VADOC joins the Virginia Department of Transportation as one of two STAR winners among six finalists. It's important to note that this is VADOC's third STAR Award since 2013. The SLC recognized the department's Segregation Step-Down Program in 2013. In 2014, our agency shared the award with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for our partnership in assisting offenders with obtaining valid state ID cards before returning to their communities.

In mid-July, Deputy Director Cookie Scott, Chief of Corrections David Robinson, Corrections Operations Administrator and Compliance and Accreditation Manager Donna Lawrence and I met with auditors from the American Correctional Association (ACA) for an introductory conversation in advance of the upcoming audit of VADOC headquarters and the probation and parole districts. The auditors inquired about our departmental initiatives. In response, we shared with them information about Dialogue, the Healing Environment, Learning Teams, Restrictive Housing and our continued focus on

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## Virginia Department of Corrections Celebrates Probation and Parole Week



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Probation and parole (P&P) officers encourage and guide former offenders as they reenter their communities. P&P officers also work hand-in-hand with a wide swath of the law enforcement community to maintain contact with and monitor returning citizens.

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## Alexandria P&P Receives National Recognition for Drug Treatment



In the late spring, Governor Terry McAuliffe visited Probation and Parole District 36, Alexandria, in honor of its national recognition as an "Outstanding Treatment Effort" by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran joined in the activities which focused on District 36's substantial, long-term community collaboration. The May 24 event brought praise to the role the Alexandria Probation and Parole Office plays in the Alexandria Treatment and Criminal Justice Initiative, established in 1995 when Alexandria received a grant through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Initiative.

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## Most Ex-offenders Seeking Employment Are Bond Eligible

*Bonding program offers insurance for employers seeking to hire returning citizens*

Each year in Virginia, about 13,000 people are released from correctional institutions back into the community. A key component to successful offender reentry and a reduction in recidivism is how effectively these men and women can secure employment. Making this transition difficult is the barrier created by employers who view job seekers with prior criminal convictions as risky. The Federal Bonding Program was developed to remove some of that concern.

In 1966, the U.S. Department of Labor created the Federal Bonding Program to serve as a form of insurance for employers, easing some of their concerns about hiring ex-offenders while creating a smoother pathway to job placement. Fifty years after its creation, the program continues help open doors and break down barriers between ex-offenders and employers.

“Anyone with a prior conviction, whether it be a felony or misdemeanor, is bondable,” explained Kia Parson White, the Virginia Federal Bonding Program Coordinator at the Virginia Department of Corrections. “Even if they were convicted and didn’t serve time, as long as they are of legal working age, we can issue a bond.”

Federal Fidelity Bond Insurance provides a potential win-win situation for employers and the ex-offenders they chose to hire. The bonds are issued in \$5,000 increments, offering employers protection against acts of theft, larceny, forgery and embezzlement. They do not cover liability for injuries. The bonds are valid for six months or until employment is terminated.

White says her office has issued more than 15,500 bonding eligibility letters to returning citizens since starting. Many offenders have participated in reentry programming where information is shared about the bonding process. To date, 135 bonds have been issued. Not one has been cashed in by an employer.

Once a returning citizen is offered a job and a start date is established, employers interested in requesting a bond can contact Kia Parson White or local workforce development centers. The bond is instantly available, involves no paperwork and comes at no cost to the employer.

“We issue Bonding Eligibility letters to our returning citizens. These letters let employers know that the individuals are bondable. In addition, these letters explain how the program works and who to contact,” said White.

In describing the response she has received from employers, White stated, “Employers I’ve spoken with have been extremely excited about the program and how easy it was to request and obtain a bond. We want to let more employers know about this service, which is free of charge. The goal is to remove this barrier to employment which in the end makes our communities better and safer.”

For more information about the Federal Bonding Program in Virginia, contact Kia Parson White at (804) 887-8262 or by email at [virginia.bondingprogram@vadoc.virginia.gov](mailto:virginia.bondingprogram@vadoc.virginia.gov). You can read more about the program online by visiting [www.vadoc.virginia.gov](http://www.vadoc.virginia.gov) and clicking on the Community Corrections page.



## Bonding Coordinator Joins Anniversary Celebration

*Kia Parson Emphasizes Importance of Employment in Reentry*



Virginia Department of Corrections Bonding Coordinator Kia Parson attended the United States Department of Labor’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the Federal Bonding Program and spoke as part of a panel moderated by Deputy Assistant Secretary Eric Seleznow of the U.S. Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration. (See [here](#) at this link, at the 34-minute mark.)

During activities April 29 in Washington, D.C., Ms. Parson emphasized the importance of employment in a returning citizen’s reentry process and the impact that utilizing the Federal Bonding Program can have on both

the employee and the employer. She educates offenders and staff about the Federal Bonding Program. Additionally, in her capacity as the statewide Bonding Coordinator, Ms. Parson travels to jails and correctional centers to speak with offenders and staff.

A big part of her job, however, involves employer outreach. “Our goal is to make sure that (employers), as well as state and non-profit agencies, know the program exists so when employers hire skilled workers with convictions, it becomes a win/win situation for both sides,” she said.



## Director's Message

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the integrated model for reentry. The auditors were impressed with what we shared and inquired about us more widely sharing our initiatives with other departments of corrections. While we did not disclose particulars about our efforts over the last two years, it's important to note that we have shared our initiatives with other DOCs. In addition, more than a dozen state DOCs have sent delegations to Virginia to study what we are doing to maintain the Commonwealth's position as a leader in corrections. The ACA auditors also shared that they reviewed the results of the most recent audit on headquarters and district offices for which we received a compliance score of 100%. The auditors indicated that they'd be surprised if such results were not repeated. The dedicated employees of the VADOC are responsible for the success we have been able to realize.

I'd like to mention that one of the reasons other DOCs are requesting to visit our facilities is the success of our Administrative Step-Down Program which we implemented in 2011. Recently, the ACA requested that we write an article on the program for its Corrections Today magazine. I encourage you to read the article which is available [here](#).

Since their start in 2008, Learning Teams have evolved and continue to play a critical role in the success of our institutions and districts. Learning Teams are serving our agency well, facilitating the ongoing learning of policies and practices throughout our organizations. They have taken our engagements to a new and improved level. I am pleased to announce that Learning Teams are now being implemented in headquarters. All employees at headquarters will be assigned to a learning team. I expect that the successful outcomes realized in our institutions and district offices will be mirrored in headquarters, which will allow us to be of greater and improved serve to our institutions and districts.

As indicated earlier, good, dedicated and conscientious employees are our greatest asset throughout the agency. The week of July 17-23, we pause to recognize those employees working in the Probation and Parole Districts in our department for the outstanding work they're doing. Please take a moment to view my video thank-you message by clicking [here](#).

Please join me in saying "thanks" to those employees who are in the community working, at times, in a dangerous and challenging environment in an effort to promote public safety for us all

Our world today seems to be in chaos with terrorist incidents going back to Paris and most recently in Nice to the shootings of police officers in Dallas, Texas and Baton Rouge, Louisiana. There is a need to focus on not only protecting the public but also to look after those who are charged with protecting the public. All of our employees are deserving of such considerations, especially our correction and probation officers. I urge you to look after each other to be safe. Most importantly, I urge you to bring to the attention of this administration any thoughts you may have on how we may enhance safety for all in our agency.

*Harold Clarke*

## Virginia Recognized Nationally for Prison College Credit Initiative

*Virginia the Only State Holding ACE CREDIT Recommendation*

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Those courses are Introduction to Business, Business and Software Applications, Commercial Arts & Design, Computer-Aided Drafting, and Digital Print Production.

"Research shows that ex-offenders who acquired college credit while incarcerated have greater success as they reenter their communities and lower recidivism rates," said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran. "Offenders who take these classes are putting themselves on a path to productive citizenship when they are released and helping to make our communities safer."

ACE CREDIT recommendations enable learners to submit an ACE transcript for completed courses to higher education institutions for evaluation as potential transfer credit in a degree program, much as they would from a traditional institution of higher learning. Decisions

about acceptance of credit are made by individual colleges and universities.

"Many of Virginia's offenders are learning to make better choices through education," said Harold Clarke, VADOC Director. "Our teachers and principals in the prison system have worked very hard to make this happen." VADOC is nation's only correctional system to hold ACE CREDIT recommendations.

The Southern Legislative Conference (SLC) is a regional legislative group operating under The Council of State Governments that seeks to promote innovative programs and ideas in Virginia and 14 other southern states. The STAR Award recognizes programs for their creativity, impact, transferability and effectiveness.

SLC received 30 nominees for this year's STAR Award. The VADOC was one of two STAR winners among six finalists. The Virginia Department of Transportation received the other STAR Award.

This is VADOC's third STAR Award since 2013. Three years ago, VADOC received the STAR Award for its Segregation Step-Down program that utilizes evidence-based practices to provide offenders with a safe and secure way to progress to lower security settings. In 2014, VADOC shared honors with the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles for a collaborative effort to provide valid state identification to offenders before they returned to their communities.



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"We are in the business of public safety and helping people make better choices," said VADOC Director Harold Clarke. "Probation and parole officers help returning citizens focus on rehabilitation and returning successfully to their communities. In this way, the officers build long-term public safety."



One indicator of VADOC's success is the recidivism rate of its returning citizens; at 23 percent, it is one of the lowest in the nation.

"We owe our probation and parole officers a debt of gratitude. They strive always to improve, utilizing research to employ evidence-based practices. Their excellent work and their professionalism have helped us become a model corrections agency and helped make Virginia a national leader," Clarke said.

Virginia employs approximately 620 P&P officers and approximately 145 senior P&P officers who supervise more than 60,300 offenders in 43 state probation and parole districts throughout the Commonwealth.



### IDOC Users Only: See the Director's Video Message



To read the Governor's Proclamation for Correctional Officer Week, click [here](#).

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Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran joined in the activities which focused on District 36’s substantial, long-term community collaboration.

The May 24 event brought praise to the role the Alexandria Probation and Parole Office plays in the Alexandria Treatment and Criminal Justice Initiative, established in 1995 when Alexandria received a grant through the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Initiative. The grant helped establish a successful partnership between Probation and Parole District 36 and the Alexandria Community Services Board.

“Our success is anchored in a long-standing collaboration with the city’s mental health services. This effective use of resources benefits our community, especially our clients as they strive to return to their communities and recover from their struggles with addiction,” said Alexandria Probation and Parole Chief Lisa Stapleton.

Together, the District 36 and the Alexandria Community Services

Board provide substance abuse assessment and treatment, reduce offender recidivism and support pathways to successful reentry.

Governor McAuliffe also announced a \$3 million mental health services budget initiative for offenders on probation in communities, statewide. Services provided will include:

- medication monitoring to avoid crisis
- screening cases
- connecting offenders to needed services
- conducting mental health exams
- crisis intervention
- individual and group therapy
- consultation with probation officers

“We are happy to see mental health services for probationers expand,” Ms. Stapleton said. “This will strengthen our efforts and promote public safety,” she added.



**Far left:** Governor McAuliffe, front, is flanked by Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran, left, and Alexandria Chief of Probation and Parole Lisa Stapleton.

**Immediate left:** members of the Alexandria Probation and Parole Office pose with, among others, Director Harold Clarke, left.

Editor's Note: Members of the VADOC Cognitive Community held a poetry contest designed to honor Probation and Parole Officers. Their efforts are represented on this and the following page.

## PROBATION AND PAROLE WEEK

People working for a common goal; assisting men and woman, to return to their respective communities.

Reintegration of returning citizens, understanding the uneasiness of life on the other side of those walls and fences left behind.

Openly bridging the gap between ex-offenders and the community....

Being not only a supervising agent of the State to a client, but also an advisor.

An alliance, one can trust to be law-abiding, cognitive and assuring in a returning citizens plight to succeed.

Tenacious in his or her job opting for the best solution.

Integrity, perseverance and honesty are matters that a Probation/Parole Officer can stand by.

Official of the Courts, to uphold sentences rendered forth.

Necessity in the facilitation of the rules and regulations of supervision.

A counselor, assisting with employment referrals, suitable and acceptable housing, and the smooth transition to a productive citizenship.

Notoriety is a characteristic that a Probation/Parole Officer possesses.....

Direction is what is needed, and the Probation/Parole officer will give you that.

Patience, kindness and the willingness to aid in a probationers/parolees success,

And perceptiveness in being able to see that all needs are met by the Probation/Parole Officer or a referral is made in the proper direction.

Respectful men and woman, young and old, there to be the bridge of authority between a man/woman that is on supervision that seeks prosperity and/or guidance.

Offenders with a commitment to become citizens, the Probation/Parole Officer is the main source of making that happen with persistence on behalf of the Returning Citizen.

Longing for those who seem obstinate to conform, the Probation/Parole Officer will try his/her very best to right an individual.....

Excellence is what we've seen in every Probation/Parole Officer encountered.

Appreciation is well deserved for all Probation/Parole Officers; it's just not said or expressed enough.

Pardoned with men and woman, some that want a future and others lost on a tangent.

Particular people chosen to do a job that most people want nothing to do with,

Respectfully doing that job to their fullest abilities and at times going the extra mile and beyond.....

Exhibiting characteristics not everyone can see;

Caring individuals, that really desire to instill change into the Returning Citizen.

Indebted to the Probation/Parole Officer, a Returning Citizen should be, for the Probation/Parole Officer is the one person that is there for him/her when no one else is.

A division of Community Corrections;

That has the common goal of getting the Returning Citizen back into society to lead a successful life.

I must give praise to Probation/Parole Officers in Virginia, for their tenacity and zest in the job they do and do so well.

Officers of the Court, upholding laws and they have shown us the way to be a productive, law-abiding citizen, and it is much well appreciated.

Now that we are on our way home, we desire to meet our new Probation/Parole Officers and begin life anew.

Workloads that are overly abundant and at times, way beyond capacity;

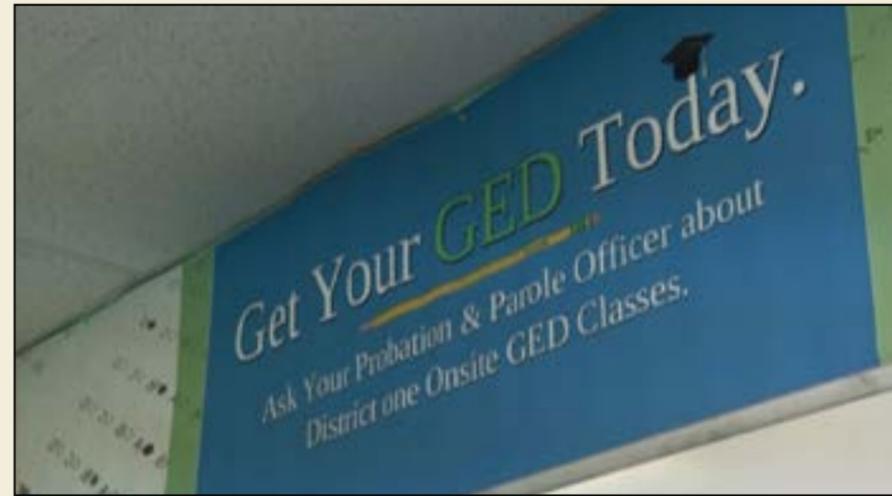
Every Probation/Parole Officer that has come to this facility has been able to exhibit role-model characteristics and traits; and,

Expressing their concerns for us, our well-being, our future, all the Probation/Parole Officers have been courteous to us, especially when an ear was needed to listen or for some good professional advice.

Kindly look at the first letter of each line, you will see a glorification upon our mind; and thank-you for all you do and have done for all of us.

Scott Stephen Taboh St. Brides Correctional Center

## Richmond P&P GED Program Helps Returning Citizens



Richmond Probation and Parole, District 1, recently implemented an education initiative to help returning citizens obtain their GEDs. "We are passionate about reentry," explains Senior Probation and Parole Officer-Reentry Specialist Sherla Hendricks. "We want to give people legs to stand on in their community."

**IDOC Users Only:** the related video is on the [Healing Environment](#) page, to see it, click [here](#).

## REFLECTION 2009 TO PRESENT

The perfect life written about in a book,  
I never expected to truly belong;  
Open to your lips, my brain, sing to me a lie,  
So that I can give up and never ever try!

Sitting here listening to one another's stories,  
Wondering.....Can I even right my wrongs?  
Open your lips, my spirit, sing to me some hope,  
So that broken ego may finally cope!

Pondering and contemplating their advice,  
I'm questioning.... Will my despair ever cease?  
Open your lips, my conscience, sing to me a solution,  
So that my fragile soul can fight this pollution!

Here and now listening to P.O. Brown,  
I'm surprised that I'm not yet dead;  
Open your lips, my eyes, sing to me a melody,  
So I can face this harsh reality!

Forty days until my release from prison,  
I'm learning.....there's always an alternative;  
Today, I open up to address my feelings,  
Reflecting, I've started the process of healing!

Keith Alan Rahn  
Deep Meadow Correctional Center

## St. Brides Correctional Center Reduces Fossil Fuel Usage with Grant-Funded Solar Panels

St. Brides Correctional Center in Chesapeake is using solar energy to preheat ground water entering its buildings, thus significantly reducing the facility's reliance on propane.

The solar panel systems are located on the rooftops of the prison's housing units and kitchen. Cold water flows through the panels and is heated by the sun before entering the internal water supply system. As a result, less propane is required to increase the water temperature to sufficient levels for use in the showers, kitchens and bathrooms.

"Instead of taking cold ground water and sending it to the water heaters, this system is right before the flame and raises the temperature up to somewhere between 120 and 130 degrees," explains Brian Newbern, Buildings and Grounds Superintendent at St. Brides Correctional Center. Newbern also served as the project manager.

"From day one when this thing turned on, it was saving the state somewhere around \$35,000 per year in propane, which is substantial for me. It's a win-win."

The solar energy project was 100% grant funded. It was contracted by the Department of General Services in partnership with several state agencies and higher education institutions under the Public-Private Educational Facilities and Infrastructure Act (PPEA). The Virginia Department of Corrections project was funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 in the amount of \$2.3 million.

Funding was authorized in 2010. Installation of the solar panel units was completed in 2012.

Click [here](#) to get an up-close view of the solar panel systems at St. Brides Correctional Center and hear from Buildings and Grounds Superintendent Brian Newbern.



Pictured: Prison rooftops at St. Brides Correctional Center are home to several solar panels. The panels absorb the warmth of the sun which serves to heat incoming ground water, saving on the facility's propane costs.

## Annual Women’s Conference a Big Hit

**Ann Wessells – P&P Chief, District 4, Accomac**

On June 27, the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual VADOC Women in Corrections Conference kicked off at the Academy for Staff Development in Crozier with almost 140 women in attendance.

The Golden Boot, presented annually to that person who has significantly contributed to the success of the conference, was awarded to Central Region Regional Administrator Marcus Hodges in recognition of his efforts in securing nationally known speakers, procuring conference bags, and his overall support.

Speakers for the two-day conference included VADOC Director Harold Clarke, Janet Vestal Kelly, Lisa Kratz Thomas, District 18 CPO Jennifer Lester, VADOC Correspondence Unit Manager Sherida Davis-Bryan, Aaron Montgomery, Carmen Rodriguez, Director’s Diversity Council representative Beverly Richardson, VADOC Organizational Manager Dr. Susan Williams, and VADOC Deputy Director N.H. Cookie Scott; these speakers encouraged the attendees to find their voices, to celebrate their successes, to

recognize the significant role that each played in the Department’s mission and to choose their attitudes.

Warden Dara Robichaux and CPO Kathy Hall facilitated the check-in during which attendees were able to celebrate and recognize their mentors, as well as remember the life of former Chesterfield Women’s Detention and Diversion Superintendent Rita Peters.

During breaks, attendees enjoyed the opportunity to use boas, leis, and sun glasses as props while posing for pictures with each other and some good-natured speakers, including Director Clarke. Attendees left the conference feeling energized and acknowledged for the critical roles that each plays in the safety of the Commonwealth. The planning committee is to be commended for producing another enjoyable conference and looks forward to celebrating the fifth anniversary of the conference in 2017.



Photos by Phyllis Blankenship – Bland Correctional Center



## What is a Working Dialogue?

You may have heard people talking about a Working Dialogue, or you may at some point be invited to participate in one, and wonder what is involved. This article describes why the Department is introducing Working Dialogues and how they are structured. Working Dialogues are all about putting Dialogue to work in the everyday workplace, to make it easier to get things done and to be more efficient or effective. There are some ideas, opportunities and issues that have always been addressed directly with your supervisor or line manager, and that remains unchanged. There are others that are more difficult because they involve a range of different stakeholders, departments or people who are affected by the situation – and this is where the Working Dialogue comes in.

A Working Dialogue is **Set Up** by the Unit Head or a member of their Executive Team, with the support of an experienced Dialogue Practitioner to help design and facilitate the entire process. Anyone can ask the Unit Head or Executive Team for a Working Dialogue on a particular topic, giving the case for why it should be considered. The theme of the Working Dialogue will be either an issue or problem that needs attention, or an idea or opportunity to introduce a new and better way of working. So, a Working Dialogue can be reactive (about a problem) or proactive (about a new opportunity). The topic and scope need to be clearly defined and written down, and it is worth checking that there is a good chance of the Working Dialogue resulting in some meaningful benefit. It may be quite local and of concern to only five or six people for a few hours, or it may be large and complex and involve 20 or more participants representing many parts of the Unit and other stakeholders beyond the Unit and require several longer meetings

Once the topic is set, some care is needed to work out who will be invited to participate, so that everyone affected is directly involved or is represented in the Working Dialogue. The aim is that all of them have an understanding and a voice in the decision-making process, and that the information and perspectives held by different people are incorporated into the changes proposed. If some were overlooked, during the Working Dialogue you would hear participants talking about 'them' without any of 'them' being in the room to respond with their particular perspective and way of thinking about the topic. Leaving out key players in any decision-making process is one of the reasons why the resulting action plans are only partially effective. Quick fixes that are designed by a small, limited group of

people often come undone when they are rolled out to others, and therefore later have to be re-designed.

The Unit Head could choose to attend the Working Dialogue, and should do so if they have information that others lack. On the other hand, they could choose to step back and offer others the chance to address issues or new opportunities in their own way.

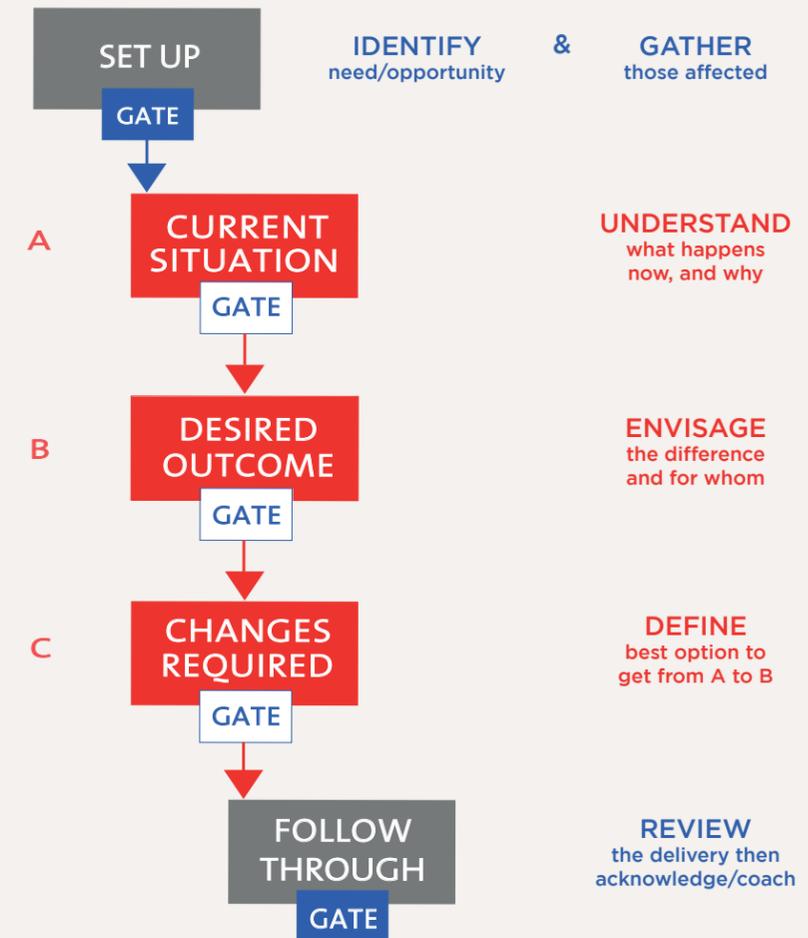
The Working Dialogue then follows a sequence of three steps: understanding the current situation, defining the desired outcome and laying out the changes required to get there.

The first is to understand the **Current Situation**, which means what happens now, why are things done the way they are and what impact that has. Understanding why things are like they are leads to better informed changes. Time is needed to hear the different perspectives and build up the complete picture of what is happening, even when there are many participants in a complex situation. Often, different people will have different ideas about what happens (or does not happen) and why, because everyone does not have access to the same information. Indeed you are likely to hear people say at some point during a Working Dialogue: "I have no idea why you do X. Could you help me to understand why you do that?" So, this first step involves inquiry and learning from each other in a constructive way. The challenge in this step is not to jump to the answer and propose solutions before you have understood the situation from all the different perspectives.

The second step is to build a picture of the **Desired Outcome**. This requires the imagination to see how things could be done in a better way, what that would look like, and what kind of difference it would make to everyone involved. What is needed here is not just general statements, like "better communication." but specific descriptions such as "no new member of staff will be in post for more than 14 days without meeting the Unit Head" or "family members will know which prison the offender was moved to within two days," along with what difference that might make to all affected. The Working Dialogue encourages imaginative and viable proposals that are within the means of the assembled group to achieve.

The third step is to work out the **Changes Required** to get from the Current Situation to the Desired Outcome. This involves listing a range of different options that could be delivered, and exploring

# WORKING DIALOGUE



### Putting Dialogue to work...

Working Dialogue is designed to change things for the better in the everyday workplace. It is a structured way of dealing with multi-stakeholder situations, and can address difficult issues as well as taking forward new opportunities with the help of those affected. The Dialogue skills (such as Check-ins, Dialogic Actions, Dialogic Practices and Leading Energies) are used to help participants to engage with each other constructively, propose helpful and viable changes, and design and deliver an appropriate action plan. Over time this moves decision-making to lower levels in the organization, freeing up time for the executive to provide direction and coaching. The outcomes are new ways of working together for the overall benefit of the Agency that deliver better financial value, operational efficiency and lasting public safety in an ethical way.

## Continued: What is a Working Dialogue?

the predictable consequences of each of them. The best option, or combination of options, is then incorporated into an Action Plan that defines who is responsible for doing what, and by when, to make the changes required for a successful outcome. This Action Plan is owned and delivered by the participants in the Working Dialogue.

Clearly the **Dialogue skills** will be needed for constructive engagement and effective thinking together within any Working Dialogue. Every member of staff has already been trained in the Dialogue skills by participating in a Dialogue Skills Training (DST) and/or working through the Dialogue Learning Plans in their Learning Teams. So people are already familiar with a Check-in, the Dialogic Actions (Move, Follow, Oppose and Bystand) and the Dialogic Practices (Voice, Listening, Respect and Suspension) and a Check-out. Now these skills become useful to design and achieve change in a structured way in the workplace. As the Dialogue Practitioner facilitates the different steps in the Working Dialogue, they remind participants of the Dialogue skills, and intervene where necessary to ensure that the skills are used.

(Most supervisors have also attended a Dialogic Coaching Training (DCT), which includes the Leading Energies (Visionary, Citizen, Performance and Wisdom) and the Accountability Progression, and both of these are also helpful for the Working Dialogues).

Built into the Working Dialogue are **Gates** at the end of each step. The Gates take the form of several questions for participants to answer, to check that the step is complete before moving on to the next. The Dialogue Practitioner facilitates the Gates to ensure that the thinking is rigorous and inclusive. This is more important than completing the process in a set time, and proper use of the Gates may slow the process down. For example it might reveal that or a perspective has not been heard or understood and more time is required, or that one of the key players has not been included and the group would need to reconvene when they are also available. The Dialogue Practitioner makes sure the progress of the Working Dialogue is documented on flip charts for everyone to see, and that the overall process is participatory. They also make sure that The Unit Head is apprised of the progress made with all three steps, including: A) the groups' understanding of the Current Situation, B) their proposals for the Desired Outcome, and C) their Action Plan to bring about the Changes Required (to get from A) to B).

There is a **Follow Up** to the Working Dialogue, where the Unit Head checks that the Action Plan has been successfully delivered and acknowledges participants for their work. There may be times when the Action Plan is not fully delivered, and the anticipated changes do not materialize - because of a weakness in the implementation, or in the Action Plan itself. This is a great opportunity for learning, and the Unit Head or members of his Executive Team are likely to want to coach participants to develop their skills to design, plan and deliver changes more effectively for this and future Working Dialogues.

Over time, the repeated use of Working Dialogues will move decision-making to lower levels in the organization in a practical way and give more people the chance to participate. This should free up time for the Unit Heads to provide direction and more coaching. The outcomes of Working Dialogues can become new ways of working together for the overall benefit of the Agency. These can be measured in terms of better financial value, improved operational efficiency and effectiveness, and the enhancement of lasting public safety - all delivered in an morally right and ethical way. This is how cultural change occurs in the Department.

The Working Dialogue was designed by Dialogue Associates specifically for the VADOC.

**Submitted by Peter Garrett of Dialogue Associates**

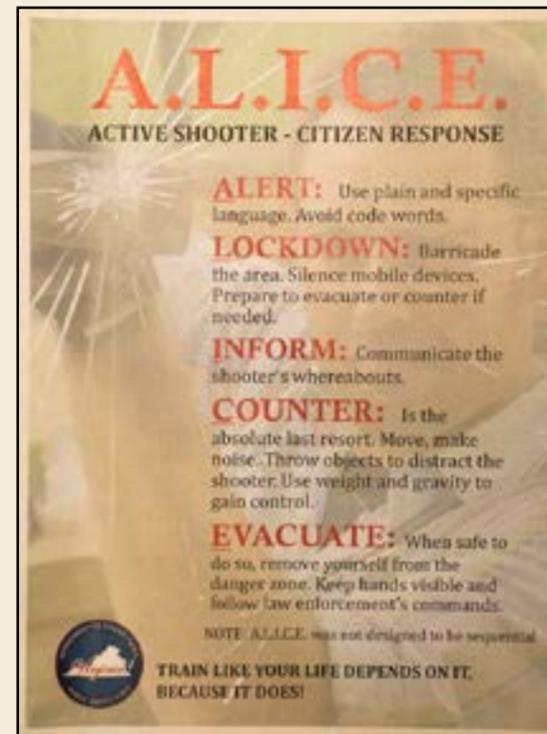
## Augusta Shares ALICE Training With Local Schools

**Submitted by Augusta Correctional Center**

After a spate of events sparked fear and school closings in the Augusta County the Virginia Department of Corrections shared its ALICE training with the community.

ALICE, an acronym for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate, is designed to increase survival during an active shooter emergency.

Augusta Correctional Center's Lieutenant Chad Crookshanks shared the VADOC ALICE training with the Augusta County Sheriff's Department, the Staunton City Police Department, Clymore Elementary School and Stuart Middle School.



Pictured: Lieutenant Chad Crookshanks with Clymore Elementary School Principal Fonda Morris, top, and with Augusta Sheriff Donald Smith, bottom.

## The Southern States Correctional Association Virginia Chapter Prepares to Host the 2017 Summer Conference



Members of the Southern States Correctional Association (SSCA) braved fierce winds, and overnight storms June 16 & 17 to deliver on their trademark fund-raising item barbecued Boston Butts. Virginia will be hosting the 2017 mid-winter planning and summer conferences in Norfolk. Join and participate in chapter activities. For more information about Virginia's SSCA chapter please visit [www.virginiassca.org](http://www.virginiassca.org) or contact Lois Fegan, Virginia Chapter Representative, at [lois.fegan@vadoc.virginia.gov](mailto:lois.fegan@vadoc.virginia.gov).

## Offenders Earn Credits from Washington and Lee University

For three weeks this spring, several undergraduate students from Washington and Lee University (W&L) entered Augusta Correctional Center (ACC) to take a college course with 10 incarcerated men. The course examined four different theories of freedom and explored the meaning of freedom. They were led by Professor Kelly Brotzman who teaches W&L's interdisciplinary poverty studies program.

"I know from my teaching and research on poverty that it can significantly affect the freedoms of some who experience it. Prison is obviously also a place where some freedoms are limited, but I wanted all students to think about all the ways they experience freedom as well as unfreedom, not just the most obvious ones," said Professor Brotzman.

Each W&L undergraduate was paired with an ACC inmate in a learning partnership, and partners took turns making entries in a daily learning journal. At the end of the class, both partners received the same grade for the journal, which constituted 30 percent of students' final grades. Students also wrote a 1,000 word essay and made a final presentation on the last day of class, consisting of either a 10-minute speech or a creative performance.

Taking the course proved enlightening for the incarcerated men.

"Being young and blessed to still have many opportunities before me, this class means a lot to me. By participating, I have gained so much knowledge in regards to freedom, the different aspects of it, and most of all the awareness to the suffering of others," one of the offenders said.

Another offender found the coursework to be uplifting. "I could not believe I would be doing something so positive in prison. It meant freedom for three hours a day. It meant I was heard, understood, a part of, and accepted with the rest of the world.

A sliver of hope in a situation that gave me so much anxiety. Change, growth and education. I will use the knowledge acquired to become more aware of the traps I face or could fall into. Be skeptical of how I could become another bed and # in a large corporation. More self-aware of my decisions and the terrifying consequences they hold. I also wish to use my new found knowledge to pull some young man or woman away from my same path, possible through local organizations."

A third offender considered his classroom experience to be life-changing. "The Washington & Lee University class was truly profound in its effects upon my life. It started out as just a positive goal to do well and not look foolish. Once the actual class started, it became something far greater! The environment, the teaching, the learning, became an opportunity to accomplish something far greater than doing well and not looking foolish. It became an opportunity to feel again! Something beautiful and inspiring started to awake within me. I had to surrender my way of thinking in order to absorb and learn what was before me. This experience has opened my emotions, and my life! It has made far more growth. I will forever be thankful for it. I count; my life counts! A realization I will never be lost to again!"

Dr. Brotzman said she was thoroughly impressed with all students in the class, and the grades students earned were consistent with all the other courses she teaches at W&L. "There was a great deal of intellectual vitality on display in our classroom every single day. The discussions were very high-level," she said.

This year's course follows a similar one Dr. Brotzman taught last spring at ACC. Six ACC offenders completed both courses now have eight college credits. "I'm so grateful to the ACC staff for making this possible," said Dr. Brotzman. Plans are being made for a third W&L course at ACC in the spring of 2017.

## VADOC Donates \$159,000 to Special Olympics of Virginia



On May 26, the Special Olympics of Virginia held a ceremony to recognize Law Enforcement Torch Run agencies across the Commonwealth of Virginia. These agencies raised donations and increased awareness for the cause during the last year. Major Margie Holcomb (ASD) was selected with Ms. Dana Kinsley (GCC) to represent the Department in presenting a check of fundraising proceeds. This check of \$159,787 consists of funds raised by the VADOC during the last year.

Pictured from left to right – Major Margie Holcomb (ASD), Sheriff Glendell Hill (Prince William County Sheriff's Office / Chair of the Law Enforcement Torch Run), and Ms. Dana Kinsley (GCC).

## Thirty-two Arrested for Drug Violations

### *Operation Consequences Initiated by VADOC Probation and Parole District in Ashland*

Thirty-two probationers and parolees are realizing the consequences of their illegal drug use today as a result of an unannounced drug-testing effort - Operation Consequences - conducted Tuesday, June 28 by the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) Probation and Parole (P&P) District 41, Ashland.

The Ashland P&P Office initiated Operation Consequences in coordination with the Town of Ashland Police, the Hanover County Sheriff's Office, the Virginia State Police and the Pamunkey Regional Jail. Law enforcement officials tested more than 70 probationers and parolees from the Town of Ashland and counties of Hanover and Caroline in netting the 32 arrests.

"We are committed to the reduction of substance abuse-related crime and taking a proactive approach in dealing with heroin/opioid abuse," said VADOC Director Harold Clarke. "Our Probation and Parole officers work in partnership with law enforcement agencies to make our communities safer, reduce victimization, and reduce recidivism," he added.

Heroin/opioids and cocaine were the drugs most often detected among the 32 arrested. The testing took place at the Ashland P&P Office.

Catch VADOC in the News!



**Most Ex-offenders Seeking Employment are Bond Eligible** Each year, the VADOC releases about 13,000 people. A story by AlexandriaNews.org tells about the important role bonding can play in their successful return.



**With Restoration of Rights, a Chance to Begin Again:** Charlottesville's Daily Progress takes a look at what it means for one ex-offender when his rights are restored.



**Community Learns About Importance of Hiring Ex-Offenders:** Finding employment is often the lynch pin of any reentry success. NBC's WHAG-4 focused on a reentry event in Winchester and spoke with local reentry advocates.



**Review of Nebraska Escape to be Led by Virginia Prison Experts:** When two inmates escaped from a Nebraska prison, VADOC's Warden Rodney Younce and Assistant Warden Anthony went to offer advice and assistance as Nebraska sought to remedy the problems that led to the escape.



**To Help A Criminal Go Straight, Help Him Change How He Thinks:** Hard-core criminals are trapped in a vicious circle of their own thinking. Cognitive treatment of offenders can show them a way out of that trap. Check out a report by WCVE 88.9 FM in Richmond.



**32 Land Back in Jail after Unannounced Drug Testing:** An unannounced drug testing of more than 70 individuals kept the Ashland P&P office quite busy recently. WWBT-12 in Richmond was one of several news outlets to pick up on the story.



**One Robber's 3 Life Sentences: '90s Legacy Fills Prisons Today:** The New York Times profiled an inmate in the Virginia prison system to illustrate the sometimes harsh sentences handed down for crack-related crimes.



**State Prison Using Solar Panels To Reduce Propane Costs:** An Associated Press story tells of the VADOC's use of solar panels to heat water and reduce costs at St. Brides Correctional Center. Read about it in the Roanoke Times.



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