

Welcome to Inside Corrections

by Robert Patton, Director



Now that we are more than halfway through 2015 and summer is about to give way to fall, I would like to take a moment to reflect and brag on some of the great work we have been accomplishing together this year.

As you all know from my previous update in June, the first four months of the year started off with a lot of encouragement for the department.

After the 2015 legislative session the department came out with an increase in our budget of \$14 million to hire more staff, add beds and make repairs at some of our facilities.

We also had some major changes in sentencing laws that will help with overcrowding and some other pieces of legislation that will help us as we continue to find ways to operate the agency more efficiently.

This year has also brought many new faces to facilities and on our Board of Corrections.

It is an honor to welcome our three new board members. You can read all about them in this edition of Inside Corrections.

I am happy to also welcome all of the new wardens who are now serving at facilities across the state. I look forward to working with them and hearing their ideas and goals for their facilities.

In addition, we have recently added a wealth of new correctional officers, some of whom have already filled roles in facilities across the state. It is also exciting to see we are actively recruiting for more academies starting soon.

I commend the commitment and dedication of these men and women who are taking on these roles. They are doing a tough job and they are keeping the citizens of the state of Oklahoma safe in the process.

I am even more proud of these individuals when I can nominate them for a national award like I did with Sergeant Larry Henson and Captain Josh Lee at Lexington Assessment and Reception Center.

I nominated them for the National Medal of Valor, which they were awarded with at the North American Association of Wardens and Superintendents annual conference in August.

The bottom line is - I will always support our correctional officers. But I couldn't be more proud of these two individuals for going above and beyond the call of duty to save someone's life.

We have also seen improvements in some offenders housed in state facilities. There have been several graduations and recognition ceremonies for offenders who have received their associate degrees and GEDs.

The time and commitment they put in to get their education and make the most of their incarceration doesn't rival the effort and commitment by the staff and program administrators who make it happen day in and day out.

Without these programs being administered by top professionals, we would not be able to celebrate this achievement.

As you can see because of the hard work and dedication of the employees at the Department of Corrections, we have shared a great first half of the year and I am happy to say the second half looks just as promising.

It is our challenge now to keep our momentum going into the rest of this year and beyond.