



Part One
EDUCATION:
*The Key that
Unlocks Untold Doors
of Opportunities
for the Future*

by Pam Humphrey, Superintendent of Schools

“NO ONE in my family has ever completed high school; I’m the first one in my family to get a GED certificate, much less an associate degree. I never thought I could do this; this is the proudest moment of my life.”

This statement and other similar statements are heard over and over again at graduations at the various facilities throughout the state. Providing assistance to offenders who, for a variety of reasons, dropped out of school and would never have completed educational programs affords great satisfaction to Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) educators.

The ODOC base school, Lakeside, is located at Oklahoma State Reformatory in Granite, Oklahoma, and was the first in the nation to be an accredited high school behind walls, receiving accreditation through the Oklahoma State Department of Education in 1947. The education program is also accredited through AdvanEd Accreditation, which primarily targets curriculum and school improvement. The education program meets all of the rigorous requirements and standards of these accrediting agencies. All teachers are certified and the operation is maintained within the correctional education setting in the same manner as in Oklahoma public schools.

Currently, sixty-eight certified teachers

In FY2014, a total of 1,095 students successfully completed the GED program and received their high school diploma.

and administrators provide the educational programs in the minimum, medium and maximum setting, while an additional ten part-time teachers assist with the community corrections and work center programs.

By maintaining and meeting accreditation requirements, the education unit may apply for and receive various grants to enhance the educational opportunities for offenders.

Grant funding is a critical part of pro-

viding educational opportunities for students in the correctional setting, just as it is in the public school setting. During fiscal year 2014, ODOC education programs received nearly \$700,000 in federal funding for use in purchasing classroom textbooks, academic curricula, servers, software, computers and other technology instruments to support classroom teaching, as well as some full-time and part-time salaries and benefits predominantly in the community and work center programs. Without this federal assistance, it would be impossible to provide the quality of program currently in place.

Programs offered through the education unit at all seventeen state facilities are as follows: Literacy, Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Education Development (GED). Additionally, many/most facilities offer the following educational programs: Curriculum and Instructional Materials Center (CIMC) Life Skills, Thinking for a Change (TFC) and college (associate and bachelor programs).

HOW DOES A STUDENT ACCESS EDUCATION?

Offenders, arriving at the first facility following reception, are assessed with the Testing Adult Basic Education (TABE) assessment tool. The results of this assessment tool, required by both state statute

In FY2014, a total of 758 students successfully completed Adult Basic Education.

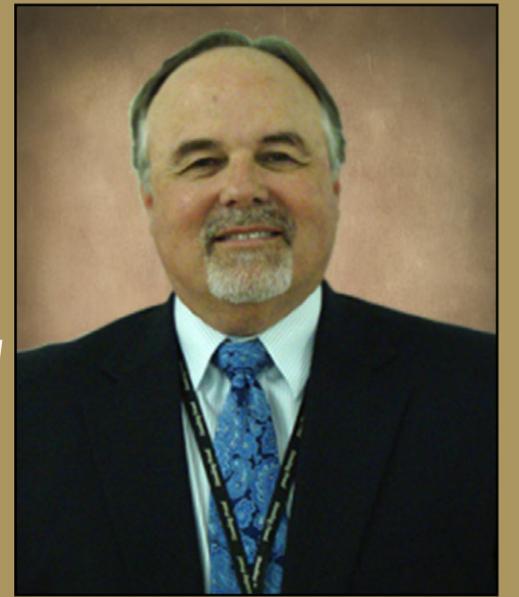
and Departmental policy, provide direction as to which educational program the student will be placed. Administrators enroll the students into the appropriate educational program, and a Student Education Plan (SEP) or an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is developed by appropriate teachers and personnel to drive the direction of the student's education path. Students begin work immediately to progress through the particular program towards completion. According to policy, each student receives quarterly TABE assessments to monitor progress, provide data for revision of the SEP/IEP and ascertain program completion.

As students successfully complete one program, they advance to the next level of educational program, with the ultimate goal being completion of the high school equivalency. Following completion of high school level, they may move into the college program, if funding is available.

During fiscal year 2014, the education unit witnessed a total of 4,694 program completions with over 704,800 hours of instruction. Progression goes from the basic literacy program to Adult Basic Education (ABE), GED and possibly into college. A total of 1,095 students successfully completed their GED and received their high school diploma, as it now reads on the certificates issued through the Office of Career and Technology Center, a part of the Oklahoma State Department of Education. Passing the GED is quite an accomplishment because, according to the National Education Testing Service, 40% of the graduating high school students cannot pass the GED test. *(continued on page 4)*

SOMONE YOU SHOULD KNOW

— Jack Bowers, Senior Principal —



by Pam Humphrey, Superintendent of Schools

Jack Bowers currently serves as the Senior Principal for Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC). Having received his Bachelor of Arts' Degree from Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) in 1979, Mr. Bowers began his teaching career in Freedom Public Schools. While teaching, he continued at the university, receiving his Master of Arts' Degree in elementary administration with a principal's certification in 1985, when he moved into an administrative role in the same system, serving there until 1990.

From August 1990 through May 2008, Mr. Bowers became a principal in the Cherokee Public School, providing supervision for the elementary school, overseeing the direction of the school program, reviewing curriculum, evaluating progress of students and teachers, and submitting reports to administration and Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Upon retirement, Mr. Bowers joined us in the Oklahoma Department of Corrections at the James Crabtree Correctional Center (JCCC) as the Correctional Teacher II, providing oversight for JCCC and William S. Key Correctional Center (WKCC) educational programs, supervising teachers, coordinating curriculum and schedule changes and serving as the Chief Examiner of the GED® Assessment. In September 2013, Mr. Bowers promoted to Regional Principal, supervising Correctional Teachers II and delivering leadership for eight facilities on the western side of the state, a position which he held until February 2015, when he was promoted to Sr. Principal. He now assists Superintendent Pam Humphrey, providing statewide direction of the education program, interviewing and hiring educators, aiding in monitoring various federal programs, maintaining accreditation and teacher certification, and assisting in the oversight of the base school, Lakeside, at

Oklahoma State Reformatory (OSR).

Mr. Bowers carries many years of knowledge and experience to the education unit here at ODOC. He possesses a very pleasant personality and demeanor that abets him in quickly cultivating both rapport and respect with individuals at all work levels; the professionalism he exhibits only works to enhance those relationships.

Mr. Bowers says, *"I came to Corrections wanting to contribute and make a difference in the offenders' educational experience. Correctional education has far exceeded my expectations. I have found that working with the education staff and the offenders is a richly rewarding experience."* He further says, *"Correctional education is the best work experience of my career."*

Congratulations to Mr. Bowers for his accomplishments both in the public school setting and now in corrections. ODOC Education gained an outstanding employee in Mr. Bowers.



GED graduates from a recent ceremony at BJCC in Alva, Oklahoma. The offenders wearing red collars are honor students scoring in the top 20% nationally. Offenders wearing the blue collars are the class Valedictorian and Salutatorian.

(continued from page 2)
CELEBRATIONS AND GRADUATIONS

Graduations provide the ultimate motivation for students to progress through the various programs. As the literacy students complete and move into the ABE program, so the ABE students complete and move into the GED Program. Upon proving readiness through both the TABE assessment and the Official Practice Test for the GED, students are registered and permitted to take the GED assessment. This successful completion qualifies them to participate in the graduations, hosted at each facility.

Some facilities host annual graduations, while others host them twice a year, and one facility has so many graduates, they now host graduations each season. Bill Johnson Correctional Center (BJCC) education staff assisted more than 314 students in completion of the GED program during fiscal year 2014.

Graduations provide times of acknowledgement of accomplishments, times for staff and administration to come together

to observe students receiving awards and times for family members to come participate in a program in which they never thought they could participate. Once their family members were “locked up,” their hopes of seeing them complete their high school education were dashed. Observing the students now receiving their diplomas renews dreams and reignites flames of hopes that their family members actually can move forward on the path of successful reentry.

While BJCC has a high number of graduates, due to the programmatic focus and clientele unique to that facility, other facilities have highly focused college programs. The education unit currently partners with numerous colleges and

A total of 2,258 students successfully completed CIMC Life Skills in FY2014.

universities through the state to provide associate and bachelor degree programs to those who have met the requirements and have the financial wherewithal to participate.

COLLEGE DEGREES AND CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

During fiscal year 2014, thirty-two individuals received their associate degree at

Recent findings from the RAND Corporation out of California confirm that individuals in the correctional setting who participate in education programs had a 43% lower chance of recidivating than those who did not participate.

facilities throughout the state. On hand to present these certificates of degrees at the graduations are not only the education staff and administration from the facility, but also college personnel from the various colleges and universities partnering with the local facilities.

Rose State College, Connor State College, Tulsa Community College, Seminole State College, Northwestern Oklahoma State University, and Western Oklahoma State College partnerships provide students with necessary coursework to complete certificate and degree programs.

Recently, Tulsa Community College implemented a new program at the Dick Conner Correctional Center. The Second Chance Greenhouse Dedication was hosted to provide administration, staff and donors to the program the opportunity to view what actually takes place as instructors teach offenders the skill of raising plants and working in a greenhouse. One donor who spoke at the ceremony stated, *“I don’t consider this a donation, but rather I consider it an investment. I’m investing not only in this program, but in the lives of these people learning new skills.”* Program participants will receive certificates at the end of the coursework which will enhance employment oppor-

tunities upon release. *(For additional information on the Greenhouse story see page 12.)*

Many ask the question, “Well, how do they pay for these college courses? Does ODOC pay for them?” No, ODOC does not pay for college coursework. Previously, federal funding was available for qualifying individuals throughout the state; however, when one of the government shutdowns was nearing and at the midnight hour, federal assistance for college programs was stricken from the budget.

Funding now comes from a variety of sources: Friends of Eddie Warrior (FEW) is a non-profit organization that was set up for people to contribute funds that go to assist the women at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center (EWCC); other facilities have benefitted from grants or donations from various private individuals or organizations. Moreover, tribal funding provides significant funding for those individuals who qualify.

Besides the above-mentioned funding, many people do not know that each college or university brings to the partnership something unique for the facilities with which they partner. Certain colleges provide scholarships for the valedictorian and salutatorian of each graduating

class, while others have hosted fund raisers to acquire funding for scholarships for many students in the program. One college wrote grants to provide Information Technology equipment at various partnering facilities, and still others provide various other waivers or financial benefits for the qualifying students.

Without these vital, crucial partnerships, college programs would be virtually nonexistent. Whatever the means, it all harmonizes to one beautiful melodious theme: providing students the opportunity to raise their level of education and better equip them for re-entry into society.

THE PROOF LIES IN THE DATA

Recent findings from the RAND Corporation out of California confirm that individuals in the correctional setting who participate in education programs had a 43% lower chance of recidivating than those who did not participate: a reduction in the risk of recidivating of 13% points.

Additionally, this meta-analysis study found that for every dollar spent on correctional education programs, it nets four to five dollars in returns on reduced recidivism and post-release employment. The odds of an offender obtaining employment upon release are 13% higher

SUMMARY

In summary, educators within the Oklahoma correctional setting receive offenders at whatever level of achievement they possess upon entry and move them as quickly as possible to their highest level of achievement in the short time they are our students. Cooperating, collaborating and communicating with staff and students, ODOC Educators work to motivate and encourage students to become lifelong learners. It is a process of changing the future...one life at a time.



Oklahoma Department of Corrections
Lisa Bennett
2015 TEACHER OF THE YEAR

“My first and second grade teachers took a chance and believed in me. Without them, I would not have gone into the education field.”

LISA BENNETT, a teacher at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center (MBCC), currently teaches General Education Development (GED) classes but has also taught Literacy and Adult Basic Education (ABE). She has a Bachelor’s Degree in Education and a Master’s Degree in Guidance and Counseling from the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) in Edmond. Ms. Bennett has worked for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) since 2001. She began her career as a probation and parole officer and promoted to team supervisor in 2007. Teaching has always been her passion and even in Probation and Parole, she found ways to teach by becoming a D.A.R.E. officer and mentor and teaching in service classes as needed. She helps out at

her facility by teaching annual CPR/First Aid classes.

IN 2012, when she began working at MBCC, she was finally able to combine her corrections experience with her passion for teaching. She believes that education is an important part of an offender’s rehabilitation and that while we are here to educate offenders, we should also be role models for them. In her employment with the department, she has seen offenders on both sides “*of the fence*” and those that take advantage of and obtain their educational goals while incarcerated appear to have higher self-esteem and reintegrate into society more successfully. Ms. Bennett is currently a member of the Correctional Education Association and has been since

immediately after she became a correctional teacher.

LISA BENNETT feels blessed to be able to look forward to coming to work every day. She feels it is such an awesome experience to be able to watch these ladies come into class, sometimes after being out of school for years and years, and see the proverbial “light bulb” come on for them. Her favorite reminder to the ladies every day is that their education and GED certificate is the one thing in life that they can earn on their own and that no one can ever take away from them.

“I am here to make a difference and to restore them to their full potential. When my students do well, they are rewarded in some manner and that is the incentive to keep them reaching higher.”

I try to make time for every student as it could be the first time they have heard ‘I am proud of you.’ I want to make a difference in someone else’s life and I feel that I can do that with the Oklahoma Department of Corrections.

When you see the light come on in their eyes you know that you have reached them. It is very rewarding to take someone who may not have more than a sixth or eighth grade education and advance them to a GED certificate or higher.”

—Lisa Bennett



Tom Larman, Correctional Teacher II, at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center (MBCC) on nominating Lisa Bennett for Teacher of the Year:

“We needed a General Education Development teacher and Lisa Bennett came through for us. She was hired as a literacy teacher but when a G.E.D. position became available, I knew she would be ideal for the position. From the beginning, Bennett accepted the challenge and completed tasks assigned, even brushing up on her math so she could challenge offenders in their studies.

Bennett is a role model and lets her students know—if she can do it, they can also. I could see her potential and had no doubt she would be a big success in the prison education program. I occasionally fill in for her in the classroom, and I can see the enthusiasm and improvement of many of her students. It is a joy to see a student understand the material that is being taught and apply it to everyday life in order to improve their life. Bennett brings that to the classroom. She is a hard worker and gives one hundred percent to the job. She loves teaching and it is especially rewarding when her students reach the goal of receiving their GED certificate.

It was a pleasure to nominate Lisa Bennett as Teacher of the Year. She worked hard for it!”



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

offender's GED stories

LILLY SMITH

The following is a speech made by Class Salutatorian, Lilly Smith, at a graduation ceremony held May 7, 2015, at the Eddie Warrior Correctional Center.

To start out, I would like to congratulate my fellow classmates on a job well done. The road we have been on hasn't been an easy one. Obtaining my GED certificate was a lot more work than I imagined it could ever be. But, with a lot of patience and hard work we finally made it through. I would like to thank all the teachers for their time and patience with us. They have provided the opportunity to further our education.

I'm glad I had the chance to be in class with everyone of you. I wish you all a great future. The beauty of our journey

together is we are prepared for tomorrow. I would like to read a verse from the book of Jeremiah 29:11.

"For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

CHARLES BRYAN

Receiving my GED certificate while being in prison had been quite an adventure. I now have the opportunity to further my education in the future. This has also encouraged me to help other inmates work toward getting their GED certificate as well.

When I came into the prison system in 2008, I was facing ten years to give to the State of Oklahoma so I began searching out how I could be useful. I

discovered that the state offered free education for a GED certificate so I climbed on board and the adventure began. After I received my TABE test scores, I knew I had a challenge ahead of me. However, I also knew that staying focused would keep me from giving up. The challenge became rewarding in the end.

In the future, I will be able to further my education by going to college. This is a goal that I look forward to achieving. This will also increase my chances to have better job opportunities after I leave the Department of Corrections.

I now have the ability and confidence in helping other inmates make a difference in their lives by working with them toward a GED certificate.

These are just some of the many rewards a person can receive by getting an education. I would like to thank the John H. Lilley Correctional Center's Education staff for helping me obtain my GED.

JOHN PINKSTON

Before getting my GED certificate, nobody ever questioned me about having a high school diploma or GED certificate because I was a certified technician with the Yamaha Motor Company. Now with my being a felon people will scrutinize all my choices in life and my education will be one of them.

Getting a GED certificate is something I should have done a long time ago, but I kept putting it off because of life happening and never feeling the need to pursue it for advancement at work. After coming to prison, I figured I might as well get a GED certificate in order to broaden my horizon in any future endeavors I might

be pulled toward. Getting my GED certificate was the first step I felt I needed to take to be able to enter a different career, such as computer programming, or becoming a good author, or even one day advancing my knowledge by owning my own Yamaha Dealership.

The opportunity was there and I took it, I received my GED certificate and now I feel better knowing that I will have more options than I did before. I am already thinking of all the new doors that will open to me since I have received my GED certificate, thanks to John H. Lilley Corrections Center's education staff.

DONALD MADDEN

The following is a speech made by Donald Madden at a graduation ceremony held May 29, 2015 at John Lilley Correctional Center where he received his GED certificate.

Let me start by thanking John Lilley Correctional Center for all their interest in helping inmates achieve their goals in education. I would also like to give a special thanks to all the teachers: Ms. Martin, Mrs. Harrison, Mrs. Owens, Mr. Hurst and Mr. Soliday along with all the tutors. You have helped us lead more productive lives, and helped in the growth of our future, the futures of our families and of their families. You have given us the potential and the possibility of becoming more; of developing our minds for a future not thought possible, but now not only possible, but increasingly more likely.

Finally, I would like to thank you for giving me the privilege to speak, and let you know what an honor this is for me.

In my lifetime, I have received four

A total of 32 students received their Associate Degree in FY2014.

DUI's. Fortunately there were no accidents, but this time they sentenced me to fifteen years. So, when I arrived at John Lilley, I had no idea what I was going to do. I was divorced and no longer had any possessions. I thought "What the heck," I have the time. I convinced myself and after a week or so I decided that I would enroll myself back in school and do my best to achieve my high school diploma. I started out in pre-literacy and after a period of time, I promoted to adult basic education. Finally, I was able to move on through the GED program.

Although I was 58 years old and would be eligible for Social Security when I discharged, I somehow knew I could still benefit from the education I received. I would be able to help my grandkids out with their schoolwork; something I had never been able to do in the past. I would become more productive in society; and finally, I would be able to hold my head up and say, "Yes, I finally got my high school diploma."

A total of 551 students successfully completed the Literacy program in FY2014.



John Lilley Correctional Center GED graduates received their certificates at a ceremony on May 29, 2015.

Getting my diploma would enable me to seek out other educational opportunities. With all this in mind, this incarceration could become a blessing, instead of just a period of time wasted in my life. I finally had the time and opportunity to think about all that I have done with my life and what I could do to become a better person for myself, my family and this great nation, which offers so many opportunities.

Looking into the future, I see a lot of young men and women in the world today with the opportunity and potential to grow into our society. With all we have to offer our younger generation, like electronics and computers, to help

further their education, I feel as though we all have the potential to grow, to achieve our goals, and to become respectable citizens in our evolving society. We can help in making this world a safer and better place to live for those who follow us. Life keeps moving forward and it's time to leave the past behind. You learn what you can from your experiences and move on and I believe education is the most promising way to go.

Thanks to John Lilley education, I now have found new respect and love for the opportunity to complete my education. I know that this education, which I have worked so hard for, will lead me to the freedom I once had and gave away. If

I never take my freedom for granted, it will never be taken away again. Thanks to my own mistakes, I truly understand what freedom is, and therefore, will never take it for granted again. I live in a republic where freedom is a way of life. Sometimes it is loved and nurtured leading to a beautiful life, but often it is overlooked, misused, abused or maybe just squandered. But no longer will I squander the freedom I am fighting for. I will use my education to experience all life has left for me to experience. I will grow in my wisdom and bring forth the realization that there is so much more to be done.

And in closing, I would once again like



The opening of the new Second Chance Greenhouse at the Dick Conner Correctional Center in Hominy, Okla. is celebrated with a dedication ceremony. Officials from the Dick Conner Correctional Center and the Oklahoma Department of Corrections as well as Tulsa Community College officials are pictured with the individual donors who provided private dollars to build the new facility.

NEW GREENHOUSE CULTIVATES CORRECTIONS EDUCATION

by Nicole Burgin, Tulsa Community College

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On a typical day, you might find men in prison uniforms planting seeds or watering plants at the new Second Chance Greenhouse at the Dick Conner Correctional Center in Hominy, Okla. The greenhouse is part of the TCC Correc-

tions Education program where offenders, while in prison, can take college courses and earn certificates of achievement and/or an associate degree.

The TCC Corrections Education program, started in 2007, includes classes in computers, hotel and restaurant management and information technology. Horticulture was added in 2012. In its third

year at Conner Correctional Center, 33 students have completed the Landscape Specialist Certificate and 30 of these students also received their state pest control license as part of a partnership with the state of Oklahoma.

“The college credentials the offenders have completed allow them to re-enter society equipped with the skills to be-

come productive members of the workforce,” said TCC President and CEO Leigh B. Goodson, Ph.D. “The Corrections Education Program, like many other programs at Tulsa Community College, depends upon private funding for its special initiatives and projects.”

The Second Chance Greenhouse was made possible with private donations from Robert Spears, Richard Spears, John Spears, Jarl Johnson, Beverly Patterson, Carolyn Stees, and Jimbo Todd and the facility was built by the offenders. John Kahre, who oversaw TCC’s Horticulture program and retired after 33 years, coordinated with the offenders to build the greenhouse, design and construct a shade house, install an irrigation system, and plant a community garden for the prison. The offenders completed the community garden with supplies donated by Tulsa-area garden clubs.

One project already underway is the cultivation of several hundred tree saplings. In partnership with Up With Trees, the offenders will oversee the growing and replanting of roughly 200 saplings which will be given away each year by Up With Trees to support and strengthen Tulsa’s Urban Forrest.



Beverly Patterson and Robert Spears look around the new Second Chance Greenhouse at Dick Conner Correctional Center in Hominy, Okla. Patterson and Spears, along with five other donors, invested private dollars to build the new facility for the TCC Corrections Education program.

The TCC Corrections Education Program began as a partnership between the Oklahoma Department of Corrections, Dick Conner Correctional Center and TCC. In 2009, TCC expanded the program to include women in the Turley Correctional Center and expanded again in 2012 to include Women in Recovery in Tulsa.

Since its inception, 12 individuals have earned associate degrees and more than

345 certificates of achievement have been awarded to male and female offenders with some offenders earning more than one certificate. A study in July 2013 shows TCC graduates in the TCC Corrections Education Program succeed at a higher rate and are less likely to reoffend. The state average for recidivism is 20 percent as compared to five percent for individuals who participated in Second Chance once they were released from prison. ■