

# GEO World

3rd QUARTER 2021

A GEO Publication for Employees and their Families.



## Congratulations GEO Employees *of the Year*



The recipients of our GEO Employees of the Year awards are the embodiment of dedication and professionalism.



# Executive Chairman's Letter

**George C. Zoley**, Executive Chairman of the Board

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**Despite the ongoing challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, our employees have continued delivering high-quality support services to our government agency partners.**

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## **To the GEO Family,**

Our frontline GEO employees across the United States and overseas have continued to make daily sacrifices to care for all those in our facilities as communities across the world have confronted the ongoing challenges of the global COVID-19 pandemic.

We are proud of the fact that as of the end of November 2021, we had administered approximately 192,000 COVID-19 tests to those in our care at our Secure Services facilities, and we have worked with our government agency partners and state and local Health Departments to administer vaccinations to more than 42,000 individuals in our Secure Services facilities.

Ensuring the health and safety of all those in our facilities and our employees remains our number one priority. Despite the ongoing challenges of the pandemic, our employees have continued delivering high-quality support services to our government agency partners.

During the third quarter of 2021, we also had a number of important milestones. In September, we entered into a new five-year contract with Clearfield County, Pennsylvania, to provide support services at our Moshannon Valley Facility in connection with a five-year intergovernmental agreement between the County and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

With respect to GEO Care, we opened a new 118-bed residential reentry center in Tampa,

Florida, under contract with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. We also opened four new day reporting centers in Tennessee and two new day reporting centers in Louisiana with capacity to provide services for up to 540 individuals.

More recently, we transitioned the operation of our company-owned Guadalupe County Facility to the New Mexico Corrections Department and entered into a new lease agreement with the State of New Mexico for the use of the Facility through October 30, 2041.

Our GEO Continuum of Care® was also active in the third quarter and awarded three GEO Continuum of Care Game Changer awards to individuals who are having a positive impact in the community. The Game Changer Award honors individuals (both participants and staff) who embody the mission of the GEO Continuum of Care® by exemplifying excellence in their everyday tasks and who are committed to changing behavior and changing lives. You can learn more about the Game Changer Award recipients by visiting [WeAreGEO.com](https://www.WeAreGEO.com).

These important milestones are the result of the dedication and professionalism of our diverse workforce. The recipients of our GEO Employees of the Year awards are the embodiment of that dedication and professionalism. Please join me as we congratulate them and as we extend our gratitude to the approximately 18,500 GEO employees worldwide.

# Table Of Contents



**3rd QUARTER  
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**EDITORIAL STAFF**

Editor-in-Chief  
**Audra E. Birt**  
*abirt@geogroup.com*

Contributors  
**George C. Zoley**  
**Pablo E. Paez**  
**Chris V. Ferreira**

**Employees of the Year**

- 02 Secure Services**
- 06 International Services**
- 08 GEO Care**

**Articles**

- 13 Secure Services**
- 21 International Services**
- 22 GEO Care**

**Features**

- 15 Moore Haven Moon Pies: A Story of Hope Through Softball and Ministry**  
The Moore Haven Moon Pies are a group of Continuum of Care® participants at the Moore Haven Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility.
- 21 New Strategy to Support Aboriginal People in Custody**  
With a disproportionately high rate of Aboriginal people within the Australian criminal justice system, The GEO Group Australia has been looking at ways to deliver culturally sensitive services and help them to successfully reintegrate into the community after their release.
- 28 GEO Partnership with Probation and Parole Results in the First Annual "Female Freedom Festival"**  
What began as Women's Empowerment (WE) meetings held with the Probation and Parole program at the Santa Ana DRC, and later joined by the Orange County DRC, grew into the creation of a large community event called the "Female Freedom Festival".



## FACILITY ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR

# ERIC NOONAN

*Western Region Detention Facility*

Facility Administrator (FA) Eric Noonan began his career in corrections in 1980 with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). After serving in various positions of increased responsibility, FA Noonan joined GEO in 1997 as the Assistant Facility Administrator of Programs at the Taft Correctional Institution (TCI). Just as FA Noonan was settling into the two-year mark at TCI, he was offered a position at GEO's Lockhart Facility in Texas, and he would go on to accept a promotion at two other locations before landing at the Western Region Detention Facility (WRDF).

With the years of experience FA Noonan gained at WRDF, it's no wonder he became an expert of the high-rise building which the facility occupied, co-overseeing a \$60 million tunnel project underneath the building's foundation. The coordination of the project was trying at best, but FA Noonan was instrumental in coordinating daily operations with the lead project manager, and the project was completed in just over a year, all during the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2020, WRDF quietly celebrated its 20th anniversary, but it was not the celebration anyone envisioned - setting up virtual courts, conducting mass COVID-19 testing, establishing new

procedures for COVID-19 sanitation and housing requirements. What was intended as a milestone celebration appeared more like a start-up.

When someone has contributed to the success of one of GEO's flagship facilities, it is easy to understand why the individual is still producing positive outcomes. He has strong community ties with the local public services including the fire department, police department, county health department, various local clinics, regional hospitals and much more. FA Noonan has also built a bridge with small business owners and local charities. Over time, FA Noonan has developed an unprecedented relationship with the United States Marshal Service (USMS), which no doubt has contributed to the confidence, partnership, and growth of the USMS as a client.

Anyone who is a friend of FA Noonan understands his deep love for his wife, his children, his Doberman dog Kai, and the sea. On any given day, FA Noonan can be found on the La Jolla Shores or in his kayak on the rocky waters of the Pacific Ocean. Congratulations, FA Noonan on being selected as the Facility Administrator of the Year!





## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

# GARY A. MCCARTHY

*Broward Transitional Center*

In September 2003, Gary McCarthy joined The GEO Group as a Kitchen Supervisor at the Broward Transitional Center in Pompano Beach, Florida. With his hard work and dedication, in six short months, Mr. McCarthy was promoted to Food Service Manager.

Gary always took this position in stride by providing a safe, clean, and sanitized environment for all his staff and kitchen workers to function comfortably on a daily basis. While serving in the role of Food Service Manager at Broward, he had encountered many limitations that come with a unique and diverse population with different beliefs, religions, and dietary restrictions. Yet, Gary took the challenge on with confidence and worked with his staff to produce the best quality meals.

Gary worked in the position of Food Service Manager for thirteen years. While in this position, he maintained one of the highest levels of sanitation and sustained an exceptional level of food cost control. Mr. McCarthy is a hands-on manager; you usually will find him on the floor training his staff or workers in some capacity. He remains driven to master new techniques or retrain his staff and workers on methods to work smarter and not harder. He always says "there are many ways to get a task done but mastering it in a safe, less complex, and productive way is always the key to success."

Mr. McCarthy always manages to excel in his Monthly, Bi-Annual, and Annual Client and Corporate audits, as well as unannounced Florida Department of Health inspections with the highest scores. He has been a Certified ServSafe Manager and ServSafe Instructor/Proctor for over ten years. He has also been an ACA-Certified Corrections Manager for over six years. Gary shares his success with his staff by acknowledging their hard work and hosting multiple training sessions to certify

them as ServSafe Food Handlers. He also finds the time to mentor his peers on how to be audit-ready and always stay audit-ready.

In July 2016, Gary accepted a new position as Housing Escort Officer, excelling in the position for twelve months and earning the Center's Officer of the Year award in 2017. As a result, Gary received a promotion to Shift Lieutenant in May 2017. While Mr. McCarthy was working as a Shift Lieutenant, he was also tasked with the assignment of Acting Fire Safety Manager.

During his career, Mr. McCarthy has been constantly tasked with many challenges by his Facility Administrators, GEO Regional Directors, and GEO Corporate Directors and Managers to assist internally and externally with various facility needs. He is always up to the task, and he will always say, "if it is for the facility, then I must get the job done." He has served on ten External Audit Teams with the Eastern and Western Regional Offices.

In July of 2020, Mr. McCarthy was tasked as acting Training Manager to coordinate In-Service Training Classes for over 150 staff within five months. He took the challenge head on and managed to complete this task with weeks to spare. Mr. McCarthy's stellar track record and determination to always get the job done has earned him the honor of Employee of the Year.





## OFFICER OF THE YEAR **JUSTIN WHITLOCK**

*El Centro Detention Facility*



During activation of the El Centro Detention Facility, a major issue was discovered in the Control Center that prevented the operation of all electronically controlled gates and doors. In addition, the call boxes and cameras were not integrated into the Control Center call-up system. This resulted in having to rename every door, gate, and camera within the facility. Officer Justin Whitlock stepped up and developed a facility map identifying each door, each gate, each call-box, and each camera. He then built a large-scale display of all doors, gates, callboxes and cameras to be displayed in the Control Center to ensure staff were operating the correct cameras and doors.

For six months, Officer Whitlock worked with contractors and software developers to accurately code and integrate cameras, the perimeter detection system, and gate and door systems in the Control Center. He developed relationships with the contractors and was able to effectively troubleshoot various problems with the electronic systems during weekends, holidays, and when contractors were unavailable. He also routinely

corrected problems with various operating systems during the integration process. Various electronic contractors were able to reset systems telephonically with the help of Officer Whitlock on site. This prevented a variety of security systems from being inoperable for long periods of time.

During the installation of the new perimeter detection system, Officer Whitlock worked closely with the vendors and became familiar with the detection system. He designed a schematic detailing each zone to be utilized by staff conducting and documenting perimeter detection inspections.

In addition, Officer Whitlock has consistently volunteered to tackle extra duties and complete various projects. He routinely worked with staff from all three shifts to properly familiarize them with the operating systems and controls of the facility. He developed various forms for departments to document required security inspections.

Officer Whitlock also developed a training binder of operating systems and instructions for use in the Control Center, which is routinely utilized for the instruction and training of new supervisors and newly assigned Control Center Officers.

Officer Whitlock's innovation and dedication to the start-up of the El Centro Detention Facility has earned him the honor of Officer of the Year. Congratulations, Officer Whitlock!





## GTI OFFICER OF THE YEAR **LAWANDA MCGRAW**

*Robert A. Deyton Detention Facility*

Lawanda McGraw has been an exceptional transportation officer for the Robert A. Deyton Detention Facility since April 2019. Since day one, GTI Transport Officer McGraw has been a go-getter. She has both the ability and the drive to learn and understand as much as possible to ensure she is successful in her daily responsibilities.

Transport Officer McGraw possesses a high level of experience and knowledge in the corrections field, which she utilizes during every assigned task. Her constant attention to detail, resourceful use of time, and drive to excel are evident in everything she does.

Ms. McGraw has over fifteen years of correctional experience. She started off as a cadet and quickly moved up the ranks to Lieutenant. She spent most of her career with High/Maximum Security inmates and was one of the highest ranked on-call officers in South Carolina. During that time, she took part in the training of new hires and helped implement mental health and sex offender programs. Ms. McGraw was also previously an Administrative Captain and DHO Captain. She is a strong, confident, well rounded individual who deserves the honor of GTI Officer of the Year.

Ms. McGraw is an encouraging leader to her peers, with a level-headed demeanor that sets the standard for others to follow. She makes it a pleasure for others to want to be in her presence. Her positive leadership characteristics, along with her professionalism, have resulted in detainees, her peers, and the client to respond to her respectfully, no matter the situation. She is calm, cool, and collected in every instance, and she knows how to handle any situation. Her communication skills are essential in keeping the client and GTI partners informed of required timelines, locations, and assignments. The drive and dedication demonstrated by Ms. McGraw has resulted in total satisfaction from both the client and her supervisors. She is essential to the transport mission at the Robert A. Deyton Detention Facility. Congratulations, Ms. McGraw on being selected as the GTI Officer of the Year!





## AUSTRALIA EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR **CHRISTOPHER POULIOS**

*Fulham Correctional Centre*



Highly regarded for his commitment to supporting the men in his care at Fulham Correctional Centre towards a successful reintegration in the community post-release, Activities and Wellbeing Supervisor, Christopher Poulios is also recognised as a true all-around leader.

Mr. Poulios is being honored as GEO Australia's Employee of the Year and was presented the award during a presentation at the Australian Head Office. GEO Australia's Managing Director, Pieter Bezuidenhout, presented Chris with the award and recognized him for his outstanding job performance.

Mr. Poulios has enjoyed a diverse correctional career since joining GEO Australia as a Correctional Officer in 2009. The experience he has gained since – including experience in additional roles such as a Clinician, Peer Education and Training Coordinator, and Life Skills Facilitator – prepared him to take on the role of Activities and Wellbeing Coordinator in 2018.

At the award presentation, Fulham Correctional Centre General Manager, Natalie Greenfield said "praise is regularly heard for Chris' extensive work and dedication to all aspects of his role.

His constant search for new opportunities and contributions to GEO has enhanced staff wellbeing, community engagement, company reputation, the GEO Values and the Continuum of Care model," Ms. Greenfield said.

Mr. Poulios is admired by his peers and supervisors for his ability to persevere and overcome obstacles, and to manage situations under tremendous pressure. Despite the ongoing challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, he has safely delivered a series of activities and events to men within various faith and cultural groups, and he has worked hard to introduce a range of programs in the Centre's Cultural Hub.

Fulham staff consider him a mentor who is authentic, cooperative, and inclusive. While his role primarily has a focus on inmates, he actively supports other staff with guidance and encouragement, as they also build their careers within GEO.

Mr. Poulios says, "I feel honoured to receive GEO Australia's Employee of the Year award. The advice and support I have received from the Senior Leadership Team and my team members, while taking on new challenges, has been instrumental to my achievements." Congratulations on being selected as GEO Australia's Employee of the Year!







## SOUTH AFRICA EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

# JOHAN BASSON

*SACM Head Office*

This year, the South African Custodial Management (SACM) Employee of the Year was selected from the SACM Head Office. This prestigious award was bestowed upon SACM's Head Office IT Coordinator, Mr. Johan Basson.

Mr. Basson is the last born of a family of four that includes three boys and a girl. He is married to Izani Basson and together they are blessed with a boy and a girl named Ian and Carla. Johan is a dedicated father and enjoys spending time with his family.

Mr. Basson has worked with SACM since 2000, even before the opening of the Kutama Sinthumule Correctional Center, which happened in 2002. Once the Center opened, he visited at least once a month as a consultant to assist with the implementation, training, and support of the Infinium ERP system.

Mr. Basson officially joined SACM in September 2005 as the Center's IT Coordinator. He was instrumental in drafting all the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) narratives for all IT controls. He also revamped the entire IT Infrastructure to save on capital expenditures, ongoing replacement costs, and to streamline the day-to-day support for all users.

In 2008, he was promoted to the position of IT Coordinator for the SACM Head Office and oversees the entire IT infrastructure for SACM. Upon the retirement of the previous Director of Finance and Administration, Mr. Basson was asked to take on additional administrative tasks. As such, he performs monthly payroll for all Head Office staff and the Executives at the Center. In 2021, he was appointed as the company's Information Officer to comply with South Africa's Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act.

Mr. Basson is a committed employee with exceptional knowledge of his field and great

communication skills. He is always available to assist in any matter, even if it lies outside the scope of his expertise. He is not afraid to express his opinions or suggest other options, which makes him a valued member of the SACM Head Office team.

In his spare time, he enjoys playing golf with friends and colleagues, and he assists with the arrangement of SACM's annual Charity Golf Day. He also enjoys going on holidays on the coast and in the bushveld – a sub-tropical woodland in South Africa.

He aims to continue his upward trajectory, both academically and professionally, in the field of IT, and to ensure that everyone within his department receives all the necessary support to excel in their roles. He always says, "If I'm sitting in my office relaxed then everything is under control and no one needs to worry, but when I run around the office like a headless chicken, there is something wrong." Congratulations to Johan on being selected as the South Africa Custodial Management Employee of the Year!





## BI EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR **CRISTINA ROE-GUERRA**

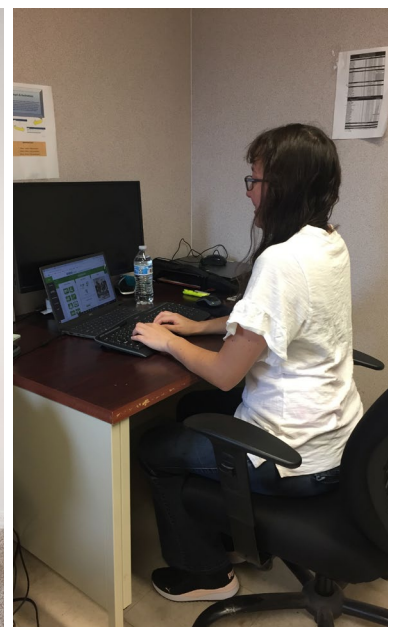
*Tampa ISAP Office*



Cristina is fully dedicated to her team, manager, caseload, and the ISAP program. She is a team player, volunteering for any opportunity available and consistently completing extra tasks without being asked to do so. When Cristina was promoted to Senior Case Specialist and relocated to Tampa, Florida, she noticed a gap in the number of community referral services available. Without being directed to, she contacted fifteen separate community providers to establish relationships with them and to better serve Tampa ISAP Participants. As a result of those efforts, she has been able to connect more participants with food, medical services, and schooling for their children.

Despite the many challenges faced during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tampa ISAP program has continued to grow and support the client mission because of staff like Cristina. On a daily basis, she demonstrates positivity, consistently helps uplift those around her, and shows our government agency partner what we can accomplish despite the challenges we're facing. The Tampa ISAP team is grateful to work with Cristina and proud of her selection as the BI Employee of the Year!

Cristina Roe-Guerra is an exemplary ISAP team member and is truly deserving of the BI Employee of the Year Award. Cristina is a Senior Case Specialist at the Tampa ISAP office, who has stepped up well beyond her duties and provided exceptional, advanced support to the client and participants this past year. Cristina has assisted with several special assignments, conducted officer training on many occasions, and has consistently provided direct officer support. An example that highlights her contributions is her assistance on a large, national detention release operation. With only a day's notice, Cristina traveled to several remote immigration processing centers in Louisiana to assist with transitioning individuals onto ISAP electronic monitoring and to train the local officers on how to continue enrolling individuals upon release at these sites. Her efforts were so successful that the client established a permanent release site in the area, which has continued to provide services to new ISAP participants over a year later.





## REENTRY SERVICES EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR **TARA LEVIN**

*Shasta County Day Reporting Center*



Believing in change is an essential part of our mission, and Tara Levin embraces that belief every day. As the Supervising Case Manager of the Shasta County Day Reporting Center (DRC) in Redding, California, Tara's role is to assist participants with behavior change while equipping staff to be the best behavior change agents possible.

Tara joined the GEO Reentry Services team in 2019. Before coming to GEO Reentry, Tara was a substance abuse counselor and a paramedic. Her background in substance abuse counseling made her an excellent fit for the Shasta County DRC.

Tara's dedication, perseverance, and passion have contributed to another successful year for the Shasta County DRC. In the last year, Tara had the opportunity to serve as the Acting Program Manager. While in this role, a new Juvenile program opened, and Tara played a significant part in getting this program off the ground. This was all while managing the Shasta County DRC during the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Tara is not afraid of a challenge, nor is she afraid to respectfully challenge the process if she believes things can be done in a more impactful way. Tara loves to celebrate staff and participant success, and she consistently recognizes everyone's accomplishments, big or small," said Danielle Gerhung, Program Manager at the Shasta County DRC.

Tara's creativity was an asset during the pandemic. Understanding the importance of prosocial events, she initiated a virtual Sobriety Night for the Shasta County DRC participants. The virtual Sobriety Night has been a huge hit, and other DRC's have now followed in Tara's footsteps. Tara also played a large role in hosting a Virtual Transition Ceremony at the DRC.

Tara is seen as a team player and is often called upon to mentor or train others, especially in the area of substance abuse. Tara's "Why" is that she wants each person she encounters to see the unique, authentic, radiant light of who they are. Tara says, "The Shasta County DRC has become a family to me. The collaboration between everyone at the DRC to engage and enhance the lives of our participants is unmatched."

When Tara is not at work, she can be found in her country home in Redding, CA. She enjoys time with her husband, their nine potbelly pigs, 12 goats, and one little dog. Their home, "Dylan's Farm," has been named after her previous dog, Dylan, who passed away last year. Dylan's farm is a small animal sanctuary, as rescuing animals is a huge passion of Tara's.

Tara has continued to demonstrate an exceptional degree of professionalism and has shown a great deal of growth and development since starting with GEO Reentry Services. Congratulations on being selected as Employee of the Year!





# What Your Teeth Say About Your Health

Written By **Susan Napolitano, Corporate Human Resources**

Smile and say “cheese”! Did you know that regular dental visits can help improve your overall health and well-being? Over 50% of U.S. adults who are over the age of 30 have some stage of gum disease. Regular dental visits are an important way to help prevent gum disease and detect other issues.

You may not realize that your teeth and gums are a window to your health! GEO employees are eligible for three annual preventive dental cleanings if enrolled in the Delta Dental Plan. During your check up and cleanings, your dentist is not just on the lookout for cavities and gum disease. There’s much more your mouth can reveal about your health. Here are some hidden problems the Center for Disease Control (CDC) states that regular dental visits may help uncover:

## SIGNS OF CANCER

Most dental exams include a screening for oral cancer. This type of cancer is the 6th most common cancer. It accounts of 30,000 newly diagnosed cases each year and 8,000 deaths. Risk factors for oral cancer may include:

- Tobacco use — both smoked and smokeless
- Heavy drinkers
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) infection

Your dentist may look for signs inside your lips and cheeks; on the tongue and on the roof and floor of your mouth; and on your jaw and neck. You should also perform your own self-examination to check for early warning signs. Look for lingering sores, swelling, bleeding, difficulty swallowing or persistent hoarseness. The good news is that the earlier oral cancer is detected and treated, the better the survival rate.

## DIABETES AND ITS COMPLICATIONS

People with diabetes are more likely to have gum disease and dry mouth, leading to problems like soreness, pain when chewing, infections, cavities, and even tooth loss. According to the American Dental Association, one in five cases of total tooth loss are linked to uncontrolled or undetected diabetes. When gum disease is left

untreated, high blood sugars may be harder to control, making diabetes difficult to manage.

## INCREASED HEART DISEASE AND STROKE RISK

People with gum disease, also known as periodontal disease, have two to three times the risk of having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious cardiovascular event.

## RESPIRATORY CONDITIONS

Did you know the bacteria from gum disease can be inhaled into your lungs and increase your risk of pneumonia and other infections? Pulmonary actinomycosis is caused by certain bacteria normally found in the mouth and gastrointestinal tract. The bacteria often do not cause harm, but poor dental hygiene and tooth abscess can increase your risk for lung infections caused by these bacteria.

## RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

New evidence suggests that bacteria from gum disease, such as gingivitis, can trigger the autoimmune inflammation that increases the severity of some types of arthritis.

Now you know what a dental visit can discover. Next, let’s talk about what you can do in between visits to improve your oral health! Here are a few habits that may help:

- Brush twice a day for at least 2 minutes and floss once a day.
- DO NOT use tobacco products; get help to quit if you do.
- Limit sugary foods and alcoholic beverages.

Brushing is probably the most obvious action item, but it is important that you are brushing properly. Gently brush back and forth in short strokes and be sure to brush the outer, inner and chewing surfaces of the teeth and tongue. Also don’t forget to replace your toothbrush every three to four months. The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends using an electric toothbrush regularly for best results. Numerous studies from dentists, scientists, and health experts have confirmed that people who

use them have healthier gums, less tooth decay, and keep their teeth longer when compared to a manual toothbrush.

Your Delta Dental benefits are there to help you as well! Three preventive exams and x-rays are 100% covered by The GEO Group Dental Plan at no out of pocket cost to you. Log onto [www.deltadentalins.com](http://www.deltadentalins.com) or call 1-800-521-2651 to review your plan benefits and find a dentist. To receive a 20% discount on Philips Sonicare toothbrushes and products go to: [brushsmart.org](http://brushsmart.org). Be sure to have your Delta Dental ID number available to receive your coupon code.

Don't forget, if you are enrolled in a Health Flexible Spending Plan (FSA), you can use your funds to assist with orthodontics, dentures, and more. Visit the FSA store for a list of eligible items when you log into your FSA account on the Wageworks/HealthEquity portal: [participant.wageworks.com/home](http://participant.wageworks.com/home).

Keep yourself and your family up to date with regular dental visits to keep your smile and your health in top shape! Use your Delta Dental resources and practice good oral health at home. These preventive steps can lead to better wellness and detect serious medical issues early.

## Contract Compliance Corner

### GEO Facilities Earn ACA & PREA Re-Accreditation/Re-Certification in the 3rd Quarter

#### Seventeen U.S. Secure Services and Residential Reentry Facilities Re-Accredited by the American Correctional Association (ACA)

- Blackwater River Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility - 100%
- Bo Robinson - 100%
- Brooks County Detention Center - 99.65%
- Broward Transitional Center - 100%
- Coastal Bend Detention Center - 100%
- Community Alternatives of El Paso County - 100%
- East Hidalgo Detention Center - 98.60%
- Grossman Center - 100%
- Heritage Trail Correctional Facility - 99.50%
- Kingman Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility - 99.40%
- Leidel Comprehensive Sanction Center - 100%
- Long Beach Community Correctional Reentry Center - 100%
- North Lake Correctional Facility - 99.50%
- Northwest ICE Processing Center - 100%
- Philadelphia Residential Reentry Center - 100%
- Phoenix West Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility - 98.60%
- Salt Lake City Reentry Center - 100%
- South Bay Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility - 99.50%
- South Louisiana ICE Processing Center - 100%

#### Eleven U.S. Secure Services and Residential Reentry facilities Re-Certified Under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

- Arapahoe County Residential Center
- Aurora ICE Processing Center
- Chester Residential Reentry Center
- Delaney Hall Residential Reentry Center
- El Monte Center
- George W. Hill Correctional Facility
- Kingman Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility
- Lea County Correctional Facility
- Long Beach Community Reentry Center
- Salt Lake City Reentry Center
- South Bay Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility

# Dr. Ann Schlarb Awarded the 2021 Susan M. Hunter Award

Written By **Monica Hook, GEO Care Communications**



Ann M. Schlarb, Ph.D., President of GEO Care and Senior Vice President of The GEO Group, was selected as the 2021 recipient of the prestigious Susan M. Hunter award by the Association of Women Executives in Corrections (AWEC) at the organization's annual meeting in October, 2021.

The hallmark of Susan Hunter's work was the change she brought about by redirecting AWEC's collective focus on collaboration, diversity, and giving a voice to all public policy stakeholders in corrections and public safety. Susan's goal was to establish a vehicle that would bring national recognition to an individual woman's commitment to and efforts on behalf of developing other women correctional leaders. Susan's selection of AWEC to receive her endowment in support of this national award speaks volumes about her commitment to the organizational vision - *each one, teach one*.

Dr. Schlarb began her career as a Bexar County Detention Officer in Texas. She also served as a Probation Officer and Treatment Specialist before becoming the Assistant Director of Operations and Treatment at a Drug/Alcohol Probation Violator's Facility. She then joined BI Incorporated (BI) and was involved in the successful development, implementation, and operation of two different national programs. Ann joined GEO as the Vice President of the Intensive Supervision Appearance Program (ISAP) during GEO's acquisition of BI in 2011. She was quickly promoted to Divisional Vice President and managed the BI monitoring and immigration services division within GEO Care. Ann was then promoted to Senior Vice President and President of GEO Care, which encompasses GEO's Continuum of Care®, intensive residential and non-residential programming, electronic

monitoring equipment and services, community-based immigration services, and correctional healthcare services. Representing more than 3,300 personnel in 150+ offices across the country, GEO Care staff provide treatment and supervision services to more than 120,000 individuals annually.

Ann is an outstanding leader who empowers, develops, and celebrates other women in corrections, and embodies the traits for which this prestigious award was created. She is an enthusiastic AWEC member and serves on the organization's Board of Directors. Ann has also been the driving force behind AWEC's Mentoring Committee since it was initially formed in 2018 and serves as the committee chair. Recognizing the value in mentoring for women at all levels in their career, she oversaw efforts to extend the Mentoring Program to women who are not eligible for AWEC membership.

Dr. Schlarb offers her time and experience to assist other women corrections professionals in her current role at GEO. She recently participated in a workshop panel entitled, "The Path to Women's Leadership Through the Journeys of Women Trailblazers" during a recent American Correctional Association (ACA) conference. During this workshop, Ann highlighted her professional journey and lessons learned, all in the spirit of sharing her experiences to benefit other women corrections professionals.

On behalf of GEO, we are extremely proud of Ann and her accomplishments during her thirty-five year career and look forward to her continued success and influence as a respected corrections leader. As a proud AWEC Corporate Sponsor, The GEO Group also extends our congratulations on the association's recent 25-year anniversary, an incredible milestone and achievement.





## New Castle's Garden of Giving

Written By **Blake Huber, New Castle Correctional Facility**

In 2013, New Castle Correctional Facility's Level 1 Unit, designated as the NCA Unit, started a small garden for giving back to the community and gaining service hours for the Residential Reformative Re-entry Program. Since its inception, the garden has continued to grow over the years. This year, the garden was expanded from 6,080 sq ft to 11,700 sq ft, nearly double the size. This year's crop has a wide variety of produce, including squash, zucchini, cucumbers, carrots, onions, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, cantaloupe, watermelon, eggplant, tomatoes, potatoes, sunflowers, and even wildflowers.

The inmates from the S.E.R.V. activity group (Socially Responsible Volunteer Experience) plant, water, weed, and maintain the garden from start to finish. This is a great experience for the inmate population, as most of them have never had a garden before or even planted flowers. By nurturing the seeds from plants to produce, it gives them a sense of fulfillment and accomplishment. Knowing the produce is going to help those in need also makes them feel good about what they are doing.

Once the produce is harvested for the week, it is all weighed out by type and documented. From there it is distributed to various local pantries and food banks. We try to vary who we donate to each week so that more people can reap the benefit of receiving fresh produce. This year, we donated produce to God's Grain Bin of Henry County, Second Harvest Food Bank of Delaware County, Blountsville Fireman's Association Pantry of Randolph County, and Deacon's Pantry of Delaware County.

Deacon's Pantry serves as a hub for several soup kitchens in Muncie, Indiana, and provides food resources to Blood and Fire Ministries, who in turn donate the food to a program that feeds children in need. Flower bouquets and some produce also goes to staff as a token of appreciation. Since July 2021, we have been able to donate 2,111 pounds of fresh produce to the community and the garden is still going strong. In the future, we hope to have a small green-house and composting abilities to help expand the garden and increase donations.



## Sail Away With South Bay

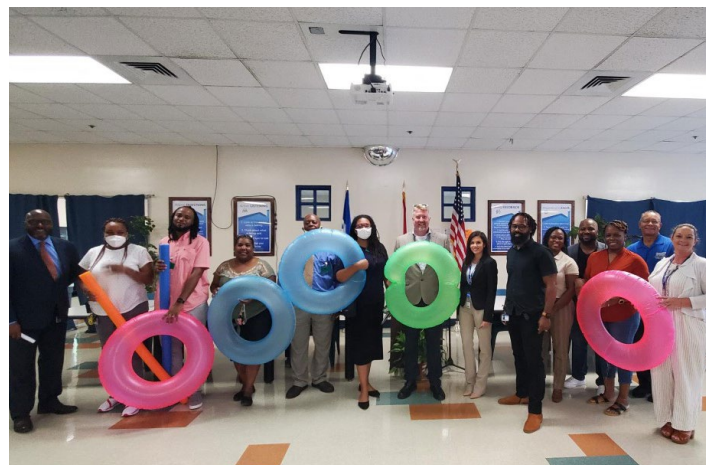
Written By **Angela Geisinger, Continuum of Care®**

GEO's Continuum of Care® teamed up with community partners to host the 'Sail Away With South Bay' Reentry Fair in July 2021. The event featured various community-based organizations from across the state of Florida that educated and informed pre-release participants about various employment, housing, health, family, and educational training resources available throughout the state. The goal was to host an event where participants would learn about services directly from the providers and walk away with a plethora of useful reentry-based information.

The participants had an opportunity to connect with Post-Release Services, as well. Two Post-Release Case Managers attended the event and answered questions about what clients could expect once released. It's always a great experience when folks can speak face to face and start to form a relationship prior to release. The event was also attended by GEO Alumni Peter Noel, CEO of The Alpha and Omega House, a post-release transitional housing provider. Multiple employers that are willing to hire people with criminal records were also in attendance. A former Post-Release participant and GEO Alumni who is now a Manager at Walmart was in attendance and spoke individually to the pre-release participants about the benefits of Post-Release Services and employment opportunities with his company.

The group discussed the importance of pre-release services and preparation for reentry to society. They also emphasized the importance of focusing on the future and not past mistakes. The innovative approach of the event was demonstrated by an open forum discussion on how economic barriers affect the physical and mental condition of participants, obstacles to employment, life changes in behavior, technological challenges, and housing obstacles.

The event not only brought a variety of resources to one location, but it also promoted community awareness through open conversations from multiple perspectives by participants and guests regarding inclusive and equitable community reintegration for returning citizens.





# Moore Haven Moon Pies: A Story of Hope Through Softball and Ministry

Written By **Beth Ellefson and Vanessa Gonzalez**, Moore Haven Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility

"Take me out to the ball game, take me out with the crowd" echoed across the town of Moore Haven as bats cracked and the crowd cheered "Let's Go Moon Pies!" The spirit of teamwork was alive in every player racing for pop ups or pushing forward to the next base, hoping and praying to make it to home plate. The sounds of the game are unmistakably present, but the backdrop of it is more unique. The Moore Haven Moon Pies are a group of Continuum of Care® participants at the Moore Haven Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility.

This team serves as Moore Haven's first group of pre-release peer mentors and are dedicated to winning on the field and in life. This devoted lineup is determined to uplift spirits and promote facility programming. The men designed and developed a softball field, created a practice calendar, and called on their peers to attend the events. David Burch, Divisional Vice President, GEO Continuum of Care® stated, "It's not just homeruns and highlights. They created community, and we are proud of our Moon Pies." Facility leadership, CoC® staff, and over six hundred residents cheered on the Moon Pies to victory.

The Moore Haven Moon Pies were challenged by the Saints Prison Ministry. The Saints Prison Ministry was founded in the late 80's. Since 1987, The Saints have played more than 4,500 games in 465 different correctional facilities in 33 states and Canada. During that time, over 34,000 inmates have made professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

The Moon Pies celebrated with a post-game feast. GEO's Senior Director of Programs, Angela Geisinger and CoC training coordinator, Vanessa Gonzalez, were in attendance and served the champions a variety of smoked entrees catered by Nachman's Seafood Market and Smokehouse. Geisinger applauded the moon pies, "What you did today is nothing short of amazing, and I'm not talking bats and gloves. It was an honor to watch so many lives change because of your commitment. Thank you Moon Pies, you have a fan for life."





## South Louisiana Celebrates 100% ACA Compliance

Written By **Deborah Lucas-Stevens, South Louisiana ICE Processing Center**

In July 2021, the South Louisiana ICE Processing Center (SLPIC) had their first American Correctional Association (ACA) audit since opening in June 2019. ACA accreditation is intended to improve facility operations through adherence to clear standards relevant to all areas/operations of the facility, including safety, security, order, care, programs, and administration. The ACA follows a set of standards, 59 mandatory and 288 non-mandatory, that were applicable to SLIPC. The on-site audit consisted of interviews with both staff and residents, along with observation of the facility during its daily operations. After all interviews and observations, the facility received 100% compliance on all mandatory and non-mandatory standards. Facility Administrator, Indalecio Ramos, and the Executive team are extremely proud of all the staff at SLIPC. On August 17 and August 19, 2021, the staff at SLIPC enjoyed an appreciation lunch for their great accomplishment.





## Heritage Trail Correctional Facility Hosts Indiana DOC

Written By **Selina Lewis, Heritage Trail Correctional Facility**

The Heritage Trail Correctional Facility recently hosted an Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) Facility Review for several facilities, including GEO's New Castle Correctional Facility (NCCF), HTCF, and the IDOC's New Castle Parole District Office, which is located on the same property as NCCF.

Well over sixty IDOC and GEO facility staff were present for the review. Each facility was provided an opportunity to make a slide-show presentation with important information and statistics on their facilities.

The presentations included a Q&A with IDOC Commissioner, Robert Carter, and Deputy Commissioner, James Basinger, along with other IDOC executive staff.

The presentations also provided a thorough overview of areas such as staffing, diversity, education, re-entry programs, medical, operations, and maintenance.

## Mesa Verde Donates Gloves to Bakersfield Homeless Center

Written By **Rebecca Barnett, Mesa Verde Processing Center**

Bakersfield's homeless population has increased in the past year due to COVID-19 and the economy, and local homeless shelters were forced to reduce capacity to meet social distancing guidelines. Bakersfield, along with the rest of the state, has high unemployment and a lack of affordable housing that has left many wondering where their next meal will come from.

The Bakersfield Homeless Center has stepped up to serve residents and local homeless three meals a day. The shelter is only able to provide the community with these much-needed meals though the generosity of financial and physical donations from individuals and businesses.

As a community member, the Mesa Verde Processing Center donated latex gloves to the shelter to use while serving these meals. We are grateful to the Bakersfield Homeless Center for supporting individuals and families in the community.



# Heritage Trail Correctional Facility Sponsors Susie's Place

Written By **Selina Lewis,**  
**Heritage Trail Correctional Facility**

Susie's Place, a local non-profit child advocacy center, is a safe place for children who are victims of crimes against children. One of the many missions of the center is to provide 'Stewards of Children Training' to local teachers, youth coaches, and others in order to identify signs of abuse and know how to report it. However, there is a cost associated with providing this training, and therefore, it had not yet been offered to other staff at the local grade school. Heritage Trail Correctional Facility was excited to learn that with their recent donation of \$500, funds will be allocated to assist in covering those additional expenses, allowing the school the opportunity to include their school bus drivers in this training. School bus drivers play a vital role in helping to keep our children safe, and this important advocacy training gives them tools necessary to help recognize children in need.



## Spin for Vets

Written By **Monica Reynaga, Eagle Pass Detention Facility**



On September 23, 2021, the Eagle Pass Detention Facility hosted a 'Spin for Vets' fundraiser at The Cycling Studio in Eagle Pass, Texas. 'Spin for Vets' is a peer-to-peer fundraising event where participants ride on stationary bicycles and raise money by receiving sponsorships. Participants who committed to spinning asked friends, family, and co-workers to sponsor them. The spinning class was led by spin Instructor Maria Diaz. The class consisted of a 1-hour nonstop ride with a mix of resistance intervals, weights, and upbeat music to keep the team motivated. The funds collected through sponsorships benefited the Lone Survivor Foundation on behalf of the Eagle Pass Detention Facility.

# WRDF Participates in Ronald McDonald Golf Tournament

Written By **Rosalie Smith,**  
Western Region Detention Facility

On September 13, 2021, the Western Region Detention Facility (WRDF) participated in San Diego's local Ronald McDonald House Charity's Annual Golf Tournament at the La Jolla Country Club. This venue is one of the area's top courses, with spectacular ocean views. Players had a shotgun tee off and played 18 holes. Ronald McDonald House Charity of San Diego provides a place to stay, meals, and the necessities of home so that families can focus on caring for their critically ill or injured child being treated at any one of San Diego's local hospitals. At San Diego's Ronald McDonald House, volunteers, staff, and houseguests come together to create a nurturing environment that supports families as they help their child heal.

WRDF employees were able to enjoy a banquet, awards ceremony, and auction following the tournament. The team included Business Manager, Manny Campos, DHO, Michael Smith, and Officers, Saul Avila and Jonathan Aguilar. We are all proud to support such a worthy cause!



## Broward Donates School Supplies to Local Shelter

Written By **Christine Zapata,**  
**Broward Transitional Center**

On Monday, September 3, 2021, the Broward Transitional Center donated book bags, lunch boxes, school supplies, and a check for \$500 to the Broward Partnership located in Pompano Beach, Florida. Broward Partnership supports families and individuals who are in need of community resources. Facility Administrator, Cynthia Lawson-Swain, and the Health Services Administrator, Christine Zapata, paid a visit to the shelter to drop off the supplies that were collected. The GEO Group continues to help our community partners and are proud that we can make a difference in many kids' lives by supplying them with the right tools to excel during the school year!



## Eagle Pass Detention Facility Participates in 3rd Annual Backpack Giveaway

Written By **Monica Reynaga,**  
**Eagle Pass Detention Facility**

The Eagle Pass Detention Facility (EPDF) recently joined local radio station, Mega 94.3, for their 3rd Annual Backpack Giveaway and Health Fair. The event was held on August 6, 2021 and was open to all school-aged children in the community. The EPDF was asked to supply markers for the giveaway, and the Facility was able to collect over 500 boxes of markers, which exceeded their initial goal. The event included many local vendors and agencies. Each vendor gave away a specific school supply which in turn gave every child the opportunity to walk away with a new backpack filled with all of the supplies they need for the upcoming school year.





## New Strategy to Support Aboriginal People in Custody

Written By **Lyndell Coutts, GEO Australia Head Office**

With a disproportionately high rate of Aboriginal people within the Australian criminal justice system, The GEO Group Australia has been looking at ways to deliver culturally sensitive services to support these men during their time in custody and help them to successfully reintegrate into the community after their release.

GEO Australia has launched a new three-year Aboriginal Wellbeing Strategy that captures all of the work already being undertaken to support the Aboriginal men in its care, and it also details further new initiatives being worked on for the future.

This work focuses on five areas of priority that reflect recommendations from a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

These include:

1. Improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in custody;
2. Providing culturally safe and responsive services;
3. Preventing the self-harm and suicide of Aboriginal people in custody;
4. Decreasing ongoing justice involvement and recidivism; and;
5. Ensuring a culturally aware and capable workforce.

Aboriginal people are significantly over-represented in the prison system and often experience poorer justice outcomes than non-Aboriginal people. Many have a history of poor education, lack of employment opportunities, poor housing, poor health, and substance abuse.

Managing Director Pieter Bezuidenhout said the strategy was developed following extensive consultation across GEO Australia and with community organisations, demonstrating a way forward over the next few years as to how GEO will help meet the rehabilitation needs of Aboriginal people.

“We look forward to working with staff, local Aboriginal communities, and other key stakeholders to deliver on GEO’s commitment to improving health and justice outcomes for Aboriginal people,” Mr Bezuidenhout said.

“This approach is an integral part of our Continuum of Care® and to support Aboriginal people with successfully reintegrating into the community post-release.”

# GEO Continuum of Care® Recognizes Two Game Changer Award Recipients

The GEO Game Changer Award honors individuals (participants and staff) who embody the mission of Continuum of Care by exemplifying excellence in their everyday tasks and who are committed to changing behavior and changing lives.



## GAME CHANGER AWARD RECIPIENT

## MIGUEL LOPEZ



When Miguel was incarcerated in 2004, he was determined to change his perspective on life. He is now aware of the thought process that brought him to prison, saying, "I bought into the lie. In our environment, we are taught, and we are led to believe, that we have to live a certain type of way because everyone around you shares basically a similar story to you. So, my train of thought was always like, 'I got to do what everyone else is doing.' It took me going to prison to realize that was a lie. I don't have to live like that." Since then, Miguel has made a positive change and motivated others as well.

When Miguel was transferred to the South Bay Correctional

and Rehabilitation Facility in Florida and enrolled in GEO's Continuum of Care®, what inspired him to join the program? Another returning citizen who shared his own story about being released and the opportunities he created.

Since his release, Miguel has been working in construction, currently as an assistant foreman. He is now motivated to get to work, and every day he shows up an hour early and stays an hour late to make sure that everything is ready for the next day. His dedication, perseverance, and hard work have inspired others and have afforded him new opportunities to continue to learn and develop in his career path.

In June 2021, GEO hosted our Continuum of Care® Annual Alumni picnic and acknowledged Miguel for the positive change he has made in his community, and the way he has inspired others.

When he received his award, he said to everyone, "It matters how many times you get up, not how many times you fall. You cannot be defined by what mistakes you've made in your path, or the opinion of others. What you want and decide for yourself is not only for yourself, but for your loved ones. I become the change in the world that I desire to be wherever I'm at." His thoughtfulness and inspiration is what makes Miguel a game changer!



## GAME CHANGER AWARD RECIPIENT **PETER NOEL**

When Peter was sentenced to prison, it was there he found his faith and purpose, and he developed a plan to help men transition back to society. Peter served at South Bay Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility in Florida. There, he engaged in GEO's Continuum of Care® faith and character programs.

For two years, he participated in these programs and found salvation, which ignited a calling to serve. He had a plan and a purpose. In 2016, Peter knew that he wanted to give back to the community and help other returning citizens transitioning back into society.

In 2017, Peter opened the doors of the Alpha and Omega House in West Palm Beach, Florida. He knew that transitional housing would be the right avenue to help other returning citizens and provide



them with the resources that they needed. As Peter explains, "Alpha and Omega is a stepping stone, rather than a stumbling block. It is a place for them to come to have doors opened, instead of closed. We help everybody who comes into our facility with all the resources that are available to anybody else."

Initially, Alpha and Omega House started as a housing vendor for GEO and a handful of other community partners. Since its inception, Alpha and Omega House has evolved and expanded its services. As Peter explained, "Now, we collaborate with several entities

providing resources in the community, from healthcare to mental health care services, job and educational opportunities, including CDL classes which are paid for." In addition, they have classes on computer training, bible studies, 12-step recovery programs, and more.

GEO's Continuum of Care® program is proud to partner with such a passionate leader. In his role, Peter has been an incredible facilitator for change.

At GEO's recent Continuum of Care® Annual Alumni picnic, Peter shared how he interacts with and helps others. He says, "I'm a tool to help others. What I explain to new guys is that Alpha and Omega House is a stepping stone. You know, step in, and get what you need. Step on, and keep moving forward. I am a tool just like a hammer in a carpenter's toolbox."

His sense of community, leadership, and faith is what makes Peter Noel a game changer!



# Season of Change Fall Festival & Reentry Seminar

Written By **Angela Geisinger, Continuum of Care**



GEO Care and GEO Alumni Services recently partnered with several reentry facilities to host a 'Season of Change Fall Festival and Reentry Seminar'. Facilities provided a week full of activities for residents, staff and visiting family members. GEO Continuum of Care® staff were on hand to compete in a variety of events as well. Each day, participants competed in a different activity or tournament, including volleyball, kick ball, Corn Hole, a Turkey Trot, a Scare Crow Relay, spoken word and essay contests, Pumpkin Bowling, and Visual Arts and Design contests. The ultimate goal was to help reduce recidivism through networking and support.

At the event, participants were able to apply for housing and employment opportunities on site. Pre-Release community members expressed gratitude for providing a hopeful path to a successful future. Pre-Release Peer Mentors and current Moore Haven Correctional and Rehabilitation Facility Resident, Brett Smith, attended the all-week event and applauded the support provided. "We forget we are part of a community. It's so easy to just live day to day and become isolated, but events like this remind me and remind us all that we are not alone," says Brett. "We are part of something, and that not only inspires me as an individual but

also pushes me to do more for my pre-release community. I want to pay it forward and inspire from the inside so upon release we are ready to inspire the world waiting on the outside."



GEO Care leadership closed out the week by hosting a family weekend. Each child was provided a treat bag full of healthy snacks, toys, and hygiene products. Children of all ages celebrated by playing games, competing in activities, and posing for fun photos with backdrops and props created by residents at Moore Haven and South Bay Correctional and Rehabilitation Facilities.

Facility Administrator for Moore Haven, Lori Sink, stated that "maintaining healthy relationships not only impacts recidivism. It also has a positive affect on the mental health



of both the incarcerated individual and their family member. Staying connected to family is crucial and days like today are an amazing way to support our residents and their families.”

Moore Haven Resident and Dad, Cody Gates, declared with tears of joy, “Days like today the razor wire just melts away, and I am able to be just a Dad again. I am thankful and blessed to be a part of this community.” GEO Care, Alumni, Facility staff, Residents and Family members did not rest after closing out the successful ‘Season of Change Fall Festival and Reentry Seminar.’ This group of holiday hopefuls were inspired to plan a weeklong winter wonderland to celebrate the holiday season.



# Tully House Residents Awarded High School Diploma

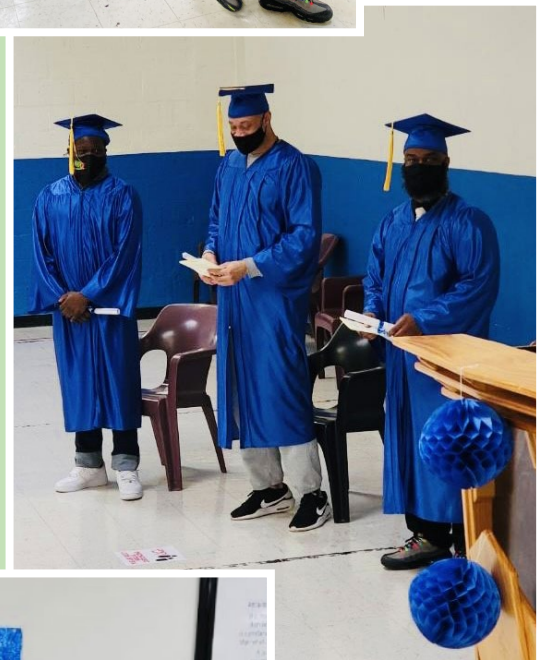
Written By **Samantha Brooks, Tully House**

Tully House officially awarded three residents their high school equivalency diplomas in October 2021. Staff and fellow residents attended the graduation ceremony. Despite the pandemic, the residents continued to work diligently to create a better version of themselves by achieving their high school equivalency diploma through the Education Department at Tully House. They were also active in seeking change in their lives by being earnestly engaged in their treatment programs.

Ms. Paula Lord, Senior Coordinator at Tully House, opened the award ceremony by welcoming the staff and residents and thanked them for being a part of the celebration. She expressed her congratulations to the graduates and she encouraged them to continue on their journey of improving their lives for the better. Mr. Michael Myers, Unit Supervisor, emphasized that the graduates continue learning, stating, "education is a lifelong process." He reminded the graduates and all who were in attendance about the history and importance of education, and how we have to continue to learn and educate ourselves.

Ms. Samantha Brooks, Education Manager, guided the residents through teaching and prepared and encouraged them to take the high school equivalency test. At the ceremony Ms. Brooks said, "young or old, whatever the circumstances were why you didn't get your high school diploma the traditional way, you did it, you are a graduate! Your desire to change and wanting to do something different is great! You are in control of how you write your story moving forward. I encourage the future graduates to start this journey. Take the opportunity now to continue working hard to obtain your high school diploma."

Ms. Geraldine Morgan, Unit Supervisor, concluded the ceremony by helping Ms. Brooks present the graduates with their diplomas and officially announced them as high school graduates of the Class of 2021!





## Dauphin County RSC “Stuffed the Bus” for Kids

Written By **Jacqueline Schap, Dauphin County RSC**

The school year is officially underway in Harrisburg, PA, and with it comes a sense of normalcy as the school year returns to in person learning for the 2021-2022 academic year. For some parents, this is a sigh of relief as the weight of at home learning is lifted, but to other parents, who are struggling with employment and income due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this brings about concerns related to how to get all of the necessary school supplies for their children. That is where Job Developer, Aqila Webb, and Phase 3 participant, William Carter, came up with the idea to “stuff the bus.” Mr. Carter came into the Dauphin County Reentry Service Center (RSC) on his days off and

created a bus for participants to contribute school items to. The bus was parked in the lobby of the RSC for the month of August and allowed participants to donate items to obtain credit for programming hours, while also filling a need for children in the community. Participants from all programs donated notebooks, pens, pencils, glue sticks, hand sanitizer, folders, and pencil cases to the bus. At the end of August 2021, the donated items were divided up, placed in bookbags, and provided to families with children in the Harrisburg School District.

Program Manager, Jacqueline Schap, said of the event, “this has been a wonderful opportunity for our participants to connect back into their community. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, having a ‘connection’ to the local community has been difficult so this event has allowed everyone to feel a sense of community again.”

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## Pocatello Opens New Connection and Intervention Station

Written By **Cole Sams, Local 8 News - Idaho**

GEO Reentry Services has opened its newest Connection and Intervention Station in Pocatello.

The station works with people from the community who are on probation or parole following a direct referral from their supervising officer.

"If they're struggling with substance abuse, if they're struggling with motivation, if they're maybe struggling finding employment, they look at all those things that tend to lead to a violation somewhere down the road, and they can refer them to the Connection and Intervention Station," said Idaho Department of Correction District Manager Jimmie Gentry.

When entering the program, participants receive Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), a type of treatment designed to change the thought process and decision-making behind addiction and criminal behavior.

In just a short time, Program Manager Amy Austin says she sees results.

"Several participants are excited to be here," Austin said. "They're happy, they're engaged. We don't require them to check in every day, but a lot of them do."





## GEO Partnership with Probation and Parole Results in the First Annual “Female Freedom Festival”

Written By **Pamela Bennett, Yadira De Santiago, and Alejandra Martinez, Santa Ana DRC, Orange County DRC and Westminster DRC**

As part of GEO Reentry Services’ commitment to fostering positive change in the community, the Orange County, Westminster, and Santa Ana Day Reporting Centers recently partnered with the Orange County Probation and Parole offices to help put on Orange County’s first “Freedom Festival for Women and Their Families.”

The idea followed a series of women’s empowerment meetings at the offices of Probation and Parole. The premise was to stage a large community festival that would provide access to local resources and information for justice-involved women, their families and friends, and those who work with them, including local professionals in the fields of social justice, gender studies, law, and reentry.

Attendees were joined by fifteen to twenty local service providers at the Dehli Center in Santa Ana, including Project Kinship, Working Wardrobes, Phoenix House, the Human Works Foundation, Santiago Canyon College Project RISE, and more. In addition to information about community resources, attendees enjoyed free tacos, pizza, ice cream, a raffle, swag bags, motivational speakers, children’s activities, and more.

Representatives from the Orange County offices of Probation and Parole, the event’s main organizers, were pleased with the turnout

and plan to make the festival an annual event. During the festival, staff members from the three non-residential reentry centers ran a booth where they shared information about GEO Reentry programming. These non-residential centers provide structured and comprehensive programs, offering a combination of treatment services, accountability and links to local resources through the Community Connections program.



GEO Reentry centers offer cognitive behavioral treatment, alcohol and drug treatment, employment services, vocational and educational training, life skills classes and more.

This programming helps participants confront their destructive personal beliefs and behaviors; helps to enhance self-esteem; and improves personal decision-making, all of which can reduce criminal risk.

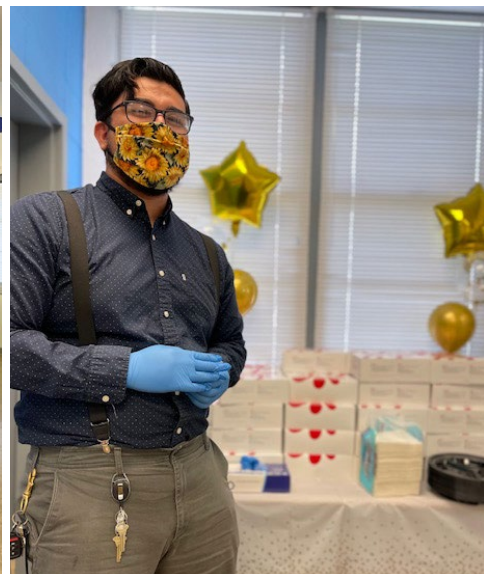
GEO Reentry staff also assisted before the event, assembling the venue's décor and procuring snacks, drinks, and gifts for attendees' children. Afterwards, GEO Reentry staff joined with Probation and Parole to plan next year's event.

"This event supports GEO Reentry's mission by helping to build community, empowering women and giving justice-involved individuals a second chance," said Yadira De Santiago, Program Manager for the Santa Ana Day Reporting Center. "The recognition from local representatives was very meaningful to us. It was great for everyone to see GEO Reentry shown in such a positive light."

Alejandra Martinez, Program Manager for the Orange County and Westminster Day Reporting

Centers, said she was glad to see how the event generated such enthusiasm from attendees.

"It was great to hear such positive comments when attendees stopped by the GEO Reentry booth," said Ms. Martinez. "At the end of the day," she added, "the festival served as invaluable community outreach that will help local justice-involved women make progress toward their individual goals and change their lives for the better."



## Welcome Back to a Sense of Normalcy

Written By **My'isha Murchison, Stockton Day Reporting Center**

In the second half of 2021, the Stockton Day Reporting Center had a welcome back event to celebrate their 'Return to Normalcy.' For the past year and half, the participants have participated in the program by phone and videoconferencing. About forty participants came out to tour the facility, meet staff, and enjoy refreshments courtesy of Chick-fil-A. The celebration was an uplifting day for all. Stockton DRC is excited to get back to helping participants (in person) gain the tools needed for change and to reduce recidivism.



## Orange County DRC Launches New Community Women's Empowerment Group In Partnership with OC Probation

Written By **Alejandra Martinez, Orange County Day Reporting Center**

The Orange County Day Reporting Center (DRC) is celebrating the launch of a new Women's Support and Empowerment Group – the result of GEO's continued collaboration with the Orange County Probation Department. Orange County DRC Case Manager, Mayra Gonzalez, partnered with Reentry Officers Lisa Tafua, Joanne Lozano, and Cherrie Ybarra to create this new space for women to come together. The mission of the Women's Support and Empowerment Group is to provide a safe environment for justice-involved women to receive support, resources, and life skills. The group was created to serve past and current justice-involved women in the county, beyond just DRC participants.

The Women's Support and Empowerment Group meets monthly at the Orange County DRC. Each session touches on a different life topic, and features a guest speaker and resources pertaining to the topic. The first session was successfully hosted in September 2021 and focused on the topic of "Navigating the Justice System as Women." For this first session, Ms. Gonzalez and Officers Tafua, Lozano, and Ybarra

invited paralegals from the Orange County Public Defender's Office as the guest speakers. Attendees enjoyed pizza, popcorn, refreshments; and other snacks, in addition to a new notebook where they can take notes during the sessions.

Future topics for the monthly sessions will include: Beyond the Limits - Educational Opportunities; Self-care; Mental Health; Breaking the Cycle of Homelessness; Addiction & Recovery; Letting Go – Forgiveness; Parenting; and more.

DRC staff understand the importance of providing gender responsive services. The Women's Support and Empowerment Group is a new way to be responsive in providing a safe space where past and present female participants and community members will be able to access support and resources. Projects like this demonstrate our team's commitment to serve the community through evidence-based practices.

Thank you to Officers Tafua, Lozano, and Ybarra for their collaboration in making this vision a reality!



# New Jersey Alumni Recovery Walk 2021

Written By **Arthur Townes, Alumni Services**

## “I am worthy”

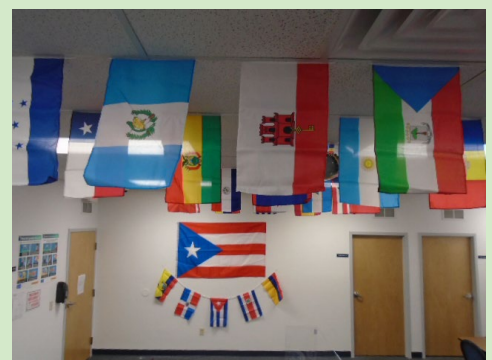
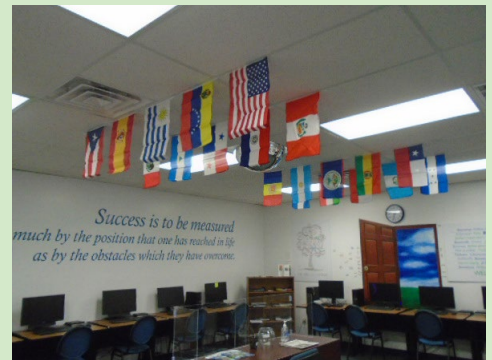
On a beautiful, Saturday morning in September 2021, hundreds of individuals in recovery, as well as advocates, supporters, and community partners, all gathered at Liberty State Park in Jersey City, NJ, to celebrate yet another year of sobriety for some and to continue to show support for others. New Jersey Alumni Manager, Arthur Townes, and several graduates from GEO's NJ-based facilities were among those in attendance. The day was filled with stories, a banner contest, a concert, networking, and a recovery walk. “It's great to see the many smiles and feel the support,” stated Arthur Townes. “The NJ alumni have been participating in recovery events for years and it never gets old.” GEO alumni joined in the activities of the day and also participated as providers. Such was the case for Enrique Diaz, who is now a CPRS (Certified Peer Recovery Specialist) with Prevention Links of Union County.



# Luzerne Hispanic Heritage Month 2021

Written By **Pedro Vargas, Luzerne County**

Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures, and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from the Caribbean, Central, and South America. GEO Reentry Services in Luzerne County is no exception. Just as the Latino community celebrates with good food and desserts, GEO Reentry staff and Luzerne County Probation Officers enjoyed a good Puerto Rican lunch provide by Assistant Case Manager, Pedro Vargas, Case Manager, Kaitlyn Emerson, and Program Manager, Stacey Velez. Additionally, the computer lab was decorated with flags representing Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Costa Rica, Spain, and others. Our participants were taught about Hispanic history, and about important hispanic leaders from American culture. They learned about these topics through a PowerPoint presentation. Our Hispanic participants expressed their appreciation for acknowledging their diverse culture.



# New Jersey Alumni and Staff Help Kids Go Back to School

Written By **Angela Geisinger and Arthur Townes, GEO Continuum of Care and GEO Alumni Services**



Members of GEO's New Jersey Alumni Services and GEO Reentry staff, led by GEO Alumni Abdul Muhammad, celebrated back to school in a big way! This dedicated team helped kids get ready for school by providing backpacks full of school supplies, well wishes, and hope. The event was a huge success, with backpacks filled with pencils, pens, markers, notebooks, erasers, rulers, masks, other essential school supplies, and lots of love. The backpacks were distributed to afterschool programs in New Jersey. Alumni Manager, Arthur Townes explained, "We targeted the afterschool programs because we felt those attending them were more in need. The parents are working extra jobs or just struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic, and we felt we could at least ease the burden a little."

Mr. Muhammad shared one of his favorite quotes on why he was enthused to have been able to participate. Quoting Frederick Douglas, he said, "it is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." Muhammad added that he prefers to support the youth now rather than later.

GEO's Alumni Services provides long-term support for former participants in GEO programs. Alumni Services assists participants in finding housing, education, and employment; making connections within the community; and building a support network. Participation is voluntary. Activities like this year's back to school celebration remind us all of the importance of giving back by supporting our community.





## Luzerne County RSC Celebrates National Recovery Month

Written By **Matthew K. Shoener, Luzerne County RSC**

Substance use and co-occurring mental health disorders significantly impact the quality of life of millions of people across the country. These issues are particularly relevant to Luzerne County, which has recently had an overdose rate significantly higher than the national average. The good news is that recovery is possible and treatment works! National Recovery Month is celebrated in September to help raise awareness of the issues associated with substance use and mental health disorders, and to recognize the transformative power of the recovery process.

At the Luzerne County Reentry Service Center (RSC), we celebrated this event by providing all participants with bags of flavored popcorn, posting recovery themed literature throughout the office, and wearing Recovery Month shirts.

We used this opportunity to celebrate those who are in recovery, recognize the treatment providers who help facilitate the change process, and increase awareness that problems exist, treatment is effective, and recovery is possible!

