

*In This Issue***BSP HORTICULTURE IS GROWING STRONG**

The horticulture at Bayside State Prison is a living classroom, teaching incarcerated men vocational skills and benefitting the community. **Pg. 1**



Horticulture program instructor Charles Wright with turnip plants.

Photo by Chris Carden / NJDOC

GROWING STRONG

BSP horticulture program benefits incarcerated men and the community

By Amy Z. Quinn

It's a chilly, rainy Wednesday and like the rest of us, Leonard Chaney is waiting for spring to show up and stick around.

He's got plants to get into the ground – lettuces and flowers, strawberries and garlic, tomatoes and zucchini and the other gifts of summer that grow so well in the sandy South Jersey soil. Right now, hundreds of growing plants in various stages are waiting, lined up in neat rows inside a half-dozen greenhouses on the sprawling grounds of Bayside State Prison. Soon, they'll be planted in 50 x 50 ft plots in the large field across from the greenhouses,

Women's Empowerment

NJDOC's first-ever women's leadership summit was a day to celebrate, reflect and celebrate. **Pg. 3**

C.E.M.I. hits the road

NJDOC's newest employee committee holds first open house, at MSCF. It's the first in a facility-wide tour. **Pg. 5**

The Devils' lucky charm

Honor guard brings NJDOC pride to NJ Devils playoff games.

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Bayside, cont'd

with a cobbled-together collection of tools and equipment and mostly, the hard work of the dozen men in the program.

Chaney and the other incarcerated men in the prison's horticulture program tend to the plants, growing them from seed – in some cases, heirloom seeds they've carefully harvested and preserved from earlier crops.

Under the direction of instructor Charles Wright, they learn year-round, from how to cultivate seeds, to how to avoid the use of pesticides by using ladybugs to control other insects. They learn some landscape design techniques, and most importantly, they learn about work ethic, consistency, and patience, Wright said.

Flowers grown by the program decorate the Bayside grounds and show up at events like Academy graduation. In some of the greenhouses, men have set up their own special projects, with mini-gardens and landscaping displays.

IP Haywood Gandy showed off his "lunch garden," with three different kinds of lettuce, arugula and spinach, the leaves rich and green against the gray day.

Side projects like that increase the sense of personal investment in the program, and teach valuable lessons, said Kate Featherston, education program specialist in NJDOC's Office of Educational Services (OES).

"If you accidentally kill something in your garden, you're going to know so much more than someone just telling you," Featherston said.

The vegetable crops are a particular source of pride, and a way for the men's work to benefit others. Last year, from about \$300 in seeds, the program grew and donated more than 7,000 lbs. of produce to local food banks including Harvest Now, a national group that works with local organizations including correctional facilities to fight hunger.

Other greenhouses hold hundreds of skinny tree seedlings, all species native to New Jersey, part of the program's partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Marc T. Virgilio manages that part of the program, spending time on-site with the men teaching them how to plant and care the young trees from bare root seedlings, which are later donated.

"So many programs that benefit Fish and Wildlife start in these greenhouses," Virgilio said. In the last year, about 2,200 trees were donated through the Bayside program. "I cannot emphasize enough how much good the program does for New Jersey's natural lands."

Next door, another greenhouse stands half-built, with new frames and wood doors made by men in the carpentry program. The greenhouse had been damaged in a winter storm, and the men in the program, under the direction of SCPO Eric Bonselaar, are rebuilding it. FWS provided the funding for the re-build. Soon it will hold hundreds more tree seedlings.

Featherston said she hopes to develop a professional certification program so the men's horticulture work and the education they've received can more directly benefit them post-release.

The program has needs: Specifically, more and newer equipment. Many of last year's crops were planted outside by hand, since the program didn't have a proper roto-tiller, and some hand tools are broken.

Still, the men in the program will get the plants in the ground, and the NJDOC employees who work with the program will keep teaching, guiding, and cultivating.

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Empowered women, empowering women at first leadership summit

As part of Women's History Month, NJDOC held its first Women's Evolution Into Leadership summit, bringing together dozens of women from across the Department for a day of deep conversation, affirmation and empowerment.

The event, held at New Lisbon, was the brainchild of Assistant Commissioner, Division of Diversity and Legal Affairs Melinda Haley, who led the team that organized it.

Attendees shared experiences and advice, along with a festive lunch and games. It was a reminder of the old saying that "empowered women, empower women" and that none of us succeeds alone.

We're already looking forward to next year!



AC Haley, AC Nardelli and Commissioner Kuhn at the women's leadership event.



Attendees at the Women's Evolution into Leadership Summit pose for a class photo.





Signs of Spring at BSP

Photos by Chris Carden / NJDOC





ON THE ROAD WITH C.E.M.I. FOR FIRST EMPLOYEE OPEN HOUSE

By Sandy Hassan
Assistant Superintendent, MSCF

CEMI, The Committee for Employee Morale and Innovation, would like to thank all those involved for ensuring that our first open house was a success.

C.E.M.I. exists to engage, inform and empower all NJDOC personnel -- Your Voices Count!

To see multiple units and committee members unite in their efforts to ensure that our staff, our dedicated men and women who work in corrections, can see the benefits and career opportunities within this great department was quite humbling, yet invigorating.

As CEMI moves forward, as we travel north, our next stop is the Adult Diagnostic & Treatment Center. On May 24th, 2023, CEMI, in partnership with CSTA, SOG, CTU, CINT, COBRA, DEI, CMU, CRU, CRT, SID, CISM, LGBTQIA+, 4BLUENJ, ADTC Wellness Committee, Human Resources, NJDOC Honor Guard, the Firearms Unit and administration will be hosting our open house once again.

If you are looking for opportunities, if you are looking for areas to expand in this career, most importantly, if you are looking to feel valued and appreciated, stop by. Come visit.

We, as a committee, as a unit, as a department, want to meet you, share in our efforts to grow and develop and, in the end, let you know, **YOUR VOICE COUNTS!!!**



Scenes from the C.E.M.I Open House





HONOR GUARD BECOMES LUCKY CHARM FOR NJ DEVILS

By Amy Z. Quinn

The New Jersey Department of Corrections Honor Guard is on a winning streak.

Newly re-energized and reconstituted after a pandemic slowdown, the Honor Guard, under the direction of Lt. George Goldner, appeared at several New Jersey Devils playoff games, as the team pursued the Stanley Cup. The team has won all but one playoff game the NJDOC Honor Guard has appeared at – we know a lucky charm when we see one!

There's a rotating roster of officers from all over the Department, from a group of 30 who practice monthly, who appear with Sgt. Michael Mann, as well as Ofc. Ambar Garcia, one of the lead instructors and members of the team.

It all began last summer, after an appearance at a Jersey Shore Blueclaws game. The Devils reached out, and the honor guard must have made an impressive showing during their regular-season appearances, because when playoff time came around, the calls kept on coming.

With the opportunity to come out of the pandemic, there were a lot of new initiatives for us to reach out to the community," Goldner said. "This administration has been very encouraging on that point."



Ceremonial Unit members at a Devils game. The Unit is open to all NJDOC officers.

Each month, members of the honor guard gather at Sea Girt to practice skills like presentation of the colors, casket watch, drilling, flag folding and presenting. Practice matters, and results in precision, and a presentation that speaks to excellence and NJDOC pride.

The honor guard is open to all NJDOC officers, with any length of service. There's also an all-female honor guard. For more information on the Ceremonial Unit (Honor Guard, Pipe & Drum Band) look for their table at the C.E.M.I Committee open houses or reach out directly to LT Goldner, at george.goldner@doc.nj.gov

