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## Correctional Education Association - Wisconsin

### "Friends" Vital to Correctional Education Programs

For the 20th consecutive year, the Wisconsin Chapter of the Correctional Education Association is showing its appreciation to individuals and organizations who have helped to improve educational opportunities for offenders in Wisconsin correctional facilities. Since the Friends of Correctional Education Award was founded, the contributions of 76 individuals and organizations have been honored by the CEA-W Board.

This year, CEA-W is again recognizing some of these volunteers with the Friends of Correctional Education award. Those receiving this award may be volunteers who have contributed time and effort to an education program, community agency employees who have presented special workshops, business people who have donated funds or materials to make programs more effective, or advocates of correctional education in some way.

Certificates for these Friends of Correctional Education award winners will be presented at special ceremonies held at the institutions involved. The 2008 award winners of the Friends of Correctional Education Award are:

#### Sister Lois Aceto

Sr. Aceto believes in people. She has spent her life working on behalf of and supporting those who are incarcerated, less fortunate, needy, poor, victims of crime, and those who live in Third World countries. Sr. Aceto was nominated for her work at two institutions, Racine Correctional Institution and Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility.

Sr. Aceto is an active part of the Reentry program at RCI. She teaches Conflict Resolution and Restorative Justice to a group of 20 inmates each week. These workshops are part of the Reentry curriculum.

At RYOFC, she trained Education staff, Social Workers, and other staff in Conflict Resolution. In the training she covered communication skills, personality types, gossip, ethics and diversity. She now comes to RYOFC Education Department once a week to teach inmates Conflict Resolution techniques.

Sr. Aceto's trainings are well attended and enjoyed by all the participants.

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The students in her classes sense her passion and appreciate her dedication to helping them be successful upon their release.

Sr. Aceto was nominated by RCI's Education Director Beth Gilbertson and RYOFC's Librarian Kay George and Social Worker Vera Burns.

**Jim Hazeman & Julie Gibes**

Jim Hazeman and Julie Gibes volunteer their time to teach gardening skills, life skills, and nutrition education to inmates in the RECAP Program at the Rock County Jail. They help the inmates to plant, grow, maintain, and harvest a half-acre vegetable garden. The produce that is grown is used by the county facilities, donated to food pantries and homeless shelters, and donated to fundraisers.

Several times during the harvest season, Jim and Julie also cook some meals with the fresh vegetables to feed the RECAP unit. They are currently starting their third year of the garden project

Besides learning about gardening, program participants derive social benefits from working within a group - --learning setting to share, to relate, to compromise and to work towards a common goal. The social interaction helps inmates to feel better about themselves. They improve their self-esteem and self-confidence. Working with living plants allows the participants to feel a sense of responsibility. Knowing that they must nourish and care for this living plant helps prisoners feel more productive and motivated.

Jim Hazeman and Julie Gibes were nominated by Blackhawk Technical College teacher Carol Seichter.

**Morris Reece**

Morris Reece works for the City of Racine Fair Housing Authority. He is also a member of Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility's Community Board.

Morris volunteers his time once a month to come into RYOFC to speak with inmates in the Housing Reentry program which is a program provided by RYOFC's Education Department. Morris provides the inmates with important housing information such as housing laws, the do's and don'ts of apartment

<b>Executive Officers</b>		<p>The CEA-W News Review is published by the members of the Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin Chapter. The opinions herein are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the executive officers, the Department of Corrections, or the body as a whole.</p> <p>It is our hope that this newsletter will be used to communicate information concerning activities, special events, new directions and policies of CEA-W and DOC.</p> <p>Articles for publication may be submitted to the CEA-W News Review CEAW News Review Editor Jerry Bednarowski at:                  W6443 Old Highway Road                  Menasha, WI 54952                  920-734-5902  <a href="mailto:jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com">jerrybednarowski@new.rr.com</a></p>
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living, budgeting money, and how your character as an individual effects your ability to get good housing.

His speeches focus on the benefits of being a good citizen and the importance of improving oneself before returning to the community. The Education Department appreciates Morris' time and expertise.

Morris Reece was nominated by RYOFC Librarian Kay George and Office Operations Assistant James Patterson.

### **Jeff Schmidt**

For about three years, Jeff Schmidt has come on a monthly basis to speak to the Health classes at Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility. He presents a summary of Sexually Transmitted Diseases and discusses the treatment for each disease. Jeff's use of slides in his presentation has proven to be an effective way to reach the students and keep their attention.

The inmates find Jeff presentation style to be casual and accessible. He is open to questions and answers them in a matter-of-fact way.

Jeff Schmidt was nominated by RYOFC teacher Judith Smith.

### **Anne Stanton**

Anne Stanton is vital to Oakhill Correctional Institution's Parenting initiative. She has been on the Community Connections Steering Committee for nearly seven years.

Anne supervises Community Connections' Read-to-Me program for incarcerated fathers. The Read-to-Me program invites men at OCI to select a children's book from the Family Center library that is age-appropriate, set up an appointment to videotape reading the book out loud, and then mail both the tape and the book to a child in their life.

Through the program, Anne helps the inmates to develop and maintain important emotional connections with their children. This enables inmates to have an important role in their child's development.

She has also taught CPR to inmates for the past three years.

Anne Stanton was nominated by OCI's Education Director Jack Rice.

### **Dave Winter**

School Psychologist Dave Winter recognized a need at the Milwaukee County Youth Education Center and has been instrumental in filling it. Since the 2004-5 school year, Dave has been co-facilitator of the facility's weekly Men's Group for school-age inmates. In addition to co-facilitating the group, Dave offers individual counseling sessions for Men's Group participants. Although Dave retired from the Milwaukee Public School System in June 2008, he continues to offer school-age inmates counseling services on a weekly basis.

Dave has provided Youth Education Center's program with a professional, highly supportive presence for both staff and inmates.

Dave Winter was nominated by Milwaukee County Youth Education Center teacher Art Gosselin.

**To join CEA go to:**  
**[www.ceanational.org](http://www.ceanational.org)**

# Reading Is Fundamental Names Carolyn Klema 2008 Volunteer of the Year

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF), the nation's oldest and largest children and families' literacy nonprofit organization, has recognized volunteers in Florida, Wisconsin, and Montana for their literacy efforts. The three have been named recipients of the 2008 Anne Hazard Richardson RIF Volunteer of the Year Award (VOYA), presented by The Coca-Cola Company.



RIF recognized Michele Greco from the BETA Center in Orlando, Florida; Carolyn Klema from the Wisconsin Department of Corrections in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin; and Roxanne Hovenkotter from the Polson School District No. 23 in Polson, Montana, for their dedication and service as truly outstanding RIF volunteers.

"Among the hundreds of thousands of individuals who volunteer to support RIF book distributions, reading motivational events, and outreach programs across the country, these three individuals demonstrate exceptional service in support of children's literacy in their communities," said Carol H. Rasco, RIF President and CEO.

This year's honorees continue a tradition of more than 40 years of developing new and innovative ways to serve children and parents in the RIF program of their respective communities.

Carolyn Klema is a Title I Teacher at Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution. Carolyn has been a RIF volunteer for Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution's Shared Beginnings program for three years. She helps inmates learn to read and teaches them the importance of reading to their children. Through the use of Family Book Fairs, children's books are provided to the inmates so they can practice before reading to their own children. Carolyn works closely with the inmates to develop and implement reading motivation activities.

Prison is not the easiest setting to create a comfortable environment for families, but Carolyn and her group are able to transform it into a more welcoming, family-oriented environment during the Book Fairs. During the reading time, inmates and their families come together for a positive experience.

Carolyn will be honored in September at a volunteer celebration, in Washington, D.C.

## Reading Outside the Bars: Book Discussion Program Aids Prison Inmates

Books mean different things to different people, but to Jeremy Pinter they invariably provide transportation from a place he can't leave. "In these circumstances, reading is a way to get outside these bars," said Pinter, 29, serving time for burglary at the medium-security Kettle Moraine Correctional Institution. "When you read, you're not in here. You're in the book."

Lately, Pinter and 13 other inmates have been in Ray Bradbury's classic science-fiction novel, "Fahrenheit 451," as part of the National Endowment for the Arts initiative known as "The Big Read." The program, administered by Mead Public Library in Sheboygan, provided the prison with paperback copies of the book in English and Spanish.

Sheboygan Mayor Juan Perez visited the prison Monday to lead an hour-long, bilingual discussion of the novel, attended by members of the prison's weekly book club and its daily English Language Learners class.

Time passed quickly as the ethnically diverse group talked about modern-day applications to Bradbury's prescient work and even shared insight into the author's life. "I don't know how this came about," Pinter said at the end of the discussion, "but for the community to think of us was nice. . . A lot of us feel forgotten and separated from society. When people reach out to us, we don't feel so separated. Someday we'll be part of society again."

Ned Buchbinder conducts the prison's reading group and assisted Perez. He has been teaching at the prison for eight years, and his career includes stints in the Peace Corps in India and in Catholic schools in Milwaukee.

Last weekend, he said, he was at a movie in Mequon with a copy of "Fahrenheit 451" in hand when he was stopped by someone who had read the book. Reading can help foster a sense of community, he told the inmates. "It's one thing to read a book or watch a movie," Buchbinder said, "but it's another to discuss it and value other people's opinions."

One member of the book club, Jeff Murrell, has been pressing for more nonfiction reading and said he enjoys studying philosophy. "I'm getting into building my character before I get out, and reading philosophy helps with that," said Murrell, 22, who is from Virginia.

Noel Gutierrez, 33, and Jonathan Soltero, 20, both natives of Mexico, haven't been letting language barriers get in the way. Soltero knows English well enough that sometimes a Spanish-language translation actually impedes his comprehension, and Gutierrez's late father was reading to him at an early age. "I don't need TV," Gutierrez said. "Reading opens more of my mind. When I read a book, I learn how to respect people, to be a better citizen and human."

Most of the prison's 1,200 inmates read at about a fifth-grade level, according to David Picard, its education director, who said this was the first time that a member of the community had visited to lead a book discussion.

Warden Michael Dittmann, in his sixth year at the prison and 22nd in the state Department of Corrections, said Perez's visit was significant. "Cooperation from the community increases the ability for inmates to be successful upon their release," he said.

The KMCI facility, which was a boys' school before its conversion in 1974, has a wealth of learning opportunities for inmates and will host its eighth job fair on September 25.

Pinter, of Sussex, is currently working on an associate's degree in business administration through the University of Wisconsin-Platteville and can't seem to get enough of books. "I write home to people and mention the book club and it's 'What?'" he said. "It may not be the norm, but it's a great opportunity. Many times I'll read something on my own and pass it on, but (the club) helps with that feeling of community."

by: Doug Carroll, *Sheboygan Press*  
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**Learn All About CEA-Wisconsin at:**  
**[www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org)**

# Local Church Addresses Climate Change Through Community Gardening Projects

Finding ways for inmates to feel connected to the community outside prison walls isn't always easy. But a project between the Madison Christian Community and Oakhill Correctional Institution near Oregon is doing just that.

Since 2005, inmates have been raising seedlings in a greenhouse at the prison for the church's garden; they also help prepare the garden for planting.

"The flower and vegetable seedlings that the inmates grow are an excellent way to create a living connection," said Jason Garlynd, who teaches a horticulture program at the correctional institution.

This month, the Christian Community, a partnership of the Advent Lutheran Church ELCA and the Community of Hope UCC, received an "eco-justice" award from the National Council of Churches in its Great Green Congregations contest.

Cassandra Carmichael, environmental director of the National Council of Churches, will visit the Christian Community on Friday to recognize the congregation and to share a recent report about the impact of climate change on church ministries. "For the Madison Christian Community, what was striking to me is that they were doing work in the community - not just planting vegetables, but really trying to connect with the community and people," Carmichael said.

"They have a really strong ministry going. They are teaching a skill but also providing a spiritual grounding. Gardening is about hope and the future and responsibility and sacred things and God's creation."

The Rev. Jeff Wild, pastor of Advent Lutheran Church, is pleased with the national honor but said what is really important is the garden ministry's focus on removing the racial, economic and social barriers that separate people today.

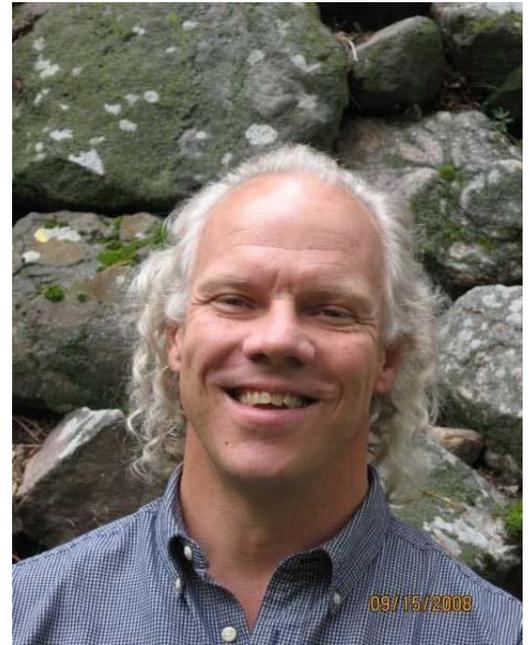
"I see this as a way of carrying out the mission of our congregation of building bridges with different socioeconomic groups in the community," he said. "It also develops a sense of appreciation of the environment by people involved in gardening. We enjoy eating the food, and harvesting and sharing it."

Though the church received its award for its work with inmates, it has longer ties to a summer gardening program with children at the nearby Wexford Ridge Neighborhood Center.

"We all work together," said Wild. "We planted in the spring, and we water it and weed it, and put mulch down and harvest it. The kids are welcome to take home produce, and share it with their families and friends. We often prepare a snack here using produce from the garden, and the kids are involved in cooking and preparing the food. So they are learning what to do with the food after they pick it." Leftover food is given to the Wexford Ridge Center or Middleton Outreach Ministry.

More recently, the Christian Community started gardening with children from its own congregation after Sunday morning worship. "It is a whole different set of children and adult volunteers. We undergird the work with song and prayer and Bible lessons," Wild said. "It's amazing to see the gardening skills they acquire."

The restorative justice program for Oakhill inmates is conducted in conjunction with Garlynd's horticulture program.



Inmates plant seeds in early spring and provide the seedlings for planting by nonprofit groups, including the Christian Community, at no charge. "The residents at Oakhill are seeing that the things they raise are put to use," Wild said.

Screened inmates of the minimum-security prison also come to Christian Community in the spring, under Garlynd's supervision, to help prepare the 6,000-square-foot garden. As many as 12 inmates a year help put down fencing and mulch pads that subdivide the garden into separate areas.

"They are happy to be here and feel like they are doing something worthwhile," Wild said. "They are; it helps us a lot." Garlynd concurred: "The men that participate in establishing the fencing and pathways for the youth summer garden program at Madison Christian Community love the feeling of making a positive contribution."

Thank-you notes and cards sent to the inmates by gardeners, as well as photos and anecdotes shared by Wild during visits to the classroom, help the men recognize their potential for being a valuable resource to the community, he added.

Half of the \$500 received by the Christian Community for the national award will be given to the Oakhill horticultural program to be used to purchase seed, Wild said.

The Madison Christian Community also previously received an Energy Star award from the U.S. Department of Energy for the congregation's success in reducing energy use by about 40 percent between 2001 and 2004. To do so, the church used more energy-efficient lighting, turned out lights when rooms were not in use and used a solar panel on the roof as a source of renewable energy. The Christian Community irrigates the garden with rainwater that flows from the roof of the sanctuary into holding tanks that store 1,000 gallons

by: Anita Weier, *The Capital Times*  
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## CEA-W Website Linked to ECB Website

Peggy Garties, Multimedia Analyst for the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board has agreed to allow the [www.ceawisconsin.org](http://www.ceawisconsin.org) website to include a link to the ECB website. ECB has lots of services that correctional educators could use. A few that come to mind in particular are:

<http://www.ecb.org/education/index.htm>

This is the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board education home page that links to all of ECB's resources, most of them free for Wisconsin educators. They also feature different programs and projects of interest on a revolving basis. There is also link to PBS resources for teachers such as Teacherline (online professional development courses) and Teachers Domain (free digital resources for classroom use or independent study from PBS programs).

<http://explore.ecb.org/itv/>

Digital Parade of Programs is the online schedule for all of ECB's instructional program broadcasts. Correctional educators can search for video programs and series by topic, curriculum area or standard and find out when they will be broadcast on Wisconsin Public Television. Programs can be recorded for later use in classrooms or kept in your libraries.

<http://www.ecb.org/guides/index.htm>

Online Teacher guides for most of the programs ECB airs.

[http://explore.ecb.org/surf/surf\\_report?subject=0](http://explore.ecb.org/surf/surf_report?subject=0)

Surf Report - Web links for a wide variety of curriculum topics and teacher needs.

# 2008 GED/HSED & Adult Literacy Conferences

October 21-23, 2008

Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton, WI



The Wisconsin GED/HSED and Adult Literacy Conferences continue to expand, adding new professional development opportunities for its participants.

Again this year, the Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin has joined the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction and the Wisconsin Technical College System to plan the conference agenda.

Over 50 different workshop sessions are scheduled for those who teach or volunteer in family literacy, ESL, ABE instruction, inmate education, or community-based organizations or literacy programs or are GED examiners or administrators. CEA-W Board members Jerry Bednarowski and Mary Stierna have helped the Planning Committee members to include the following eleven sessions specifically highlighting concerns and programs of interest to educators working in correctional settings:

## **Avoiding Inmate Manipulation, Responding to Emergency Situations in Corrections**

Presenters: Gary Herring, Wisconsin Resource Center; Dawn Martin, Wisconsin Resource Center; Jill Penny, Wisconsin Resource Center

The workshop will illustrate how staff should respond to an emergency situation in a correctional setting. Signs of the manipulative inmate and how to avoid the "STING" and being setup will be described. A group discussion of a scenario handout will be held.

## **Bridging the Gap Between Incarcerated Parents and Their Kids Through Books**

Presenters: Barb Rasmussen, Racine Correctional Institution; Beth Gilbertson, Racine Correctional Institution; Pam Petersen, Racine Correctional Institution

Book-sharing is a wonderful tool to help make and maintain family connections for incarcerated parents—and also a great way to increase reading and writing skills. Connect with your “inner child” during this interactive workshop that discusses how Fatherread® is used to promote both family connections and literacy skills.

## **Celebrating the Positives: Graduation/Recognition Ceremonies in Prison and Jail Settings**

Presenters: Marianna Ruprecht, Northcentral Technical College; Laurie Prochnow, Stanley Correctional Institution; Barb Wulfers, Stanley Correctional Institution

Come and learn about the history of graduation/recognition ceremonies inside a state prison and a county jail, how the idea started, the approvals that were needed, and the obstacles that had to be overcome. We will also discuss the details of our ceremonies including --- how often they are held, what types of diplomas are awarded, who is invited, how are visiting rules handled, guest speakers, how food is served, caps and gowns, pictures. We will also discuss the reaction of the students, families, staff, and state and community leaders to the ceremony.

## **Correctional Education: Transforming Lives**

Presenters: DeNeal Ericksen, Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center; Chuck Brendel, Moraine Park Technical College, Jerry Bednarowski, Correctional Education Association-Wisconsin

Teachers working in WTCS schools or county jails often have ex-correctional inmates or offenders awaiting sentencing to state institutions in their classes. This workshop will familiarize WTCS and county jail teachers with the academic, vocational, and lifeskills programs available in state institutions so they may more effectively make education plans with these students.

**Creating a Jail Newsletter Using Journal Writing and The Hero's Journey**

Presenter: Willa MacKenzie, Western Wisconsin Technical College

Get your students to participate in a jail newsletter. The steps it takes to edit and publish the La Crosse County Jail Newsletter will be presented. Learn ways to generate different themes using inmate discussion and the model by Reg Harris called, "The Eight Steps of the Hero's Journey." Learn several techniques to get your students motivated to write, along with an introduction to the Hero's Journal. Journaling, personal reflection and vocabulary development will also be discussed. Newsletter worthy, or not? You decide.

**Dealing with Reading Difficulties**

Presenter: Mary Dahl, Green Bay Correctional Institution

As a special education teacher of 35 years, I have had to learn some very specific reading techniques to help the dyslexic reader better to be able to decode words. In this workshop I will explain and demonstrate various techniques that I have learned to help teach syllabication rules, decode multisyllable words and building meaning. I will also share materials that I have found to be useful.

**Effectively Writing a Five Paragraph GED Essay**

Presenters: Laurie Prochnow, Stanley Correctional Institution; Barb Wulfers, Stanley Correctional Institution

This session will explain and demonstrate the steps in the process of writing a 5 paragraph essay. Questions, interaction, and discussion will be encouraged throughout the workshop. During the session, participants will have the opportunity to write an essay. A variety of handouts will be available.

**Games Tutors Play**

Presenters: Margaret Done, Robert E. Ellsworth Correctional Center; Kay George, Racine Youthful Offender Correctional Facility

Tired of the same old ways to train tutors? Add some new games to your "bag of tricks." This workshop will introduce you to how Wisconsin Literacy Council operates within the Wisconsin Department of Corrections and will share games used to train tutors. You'll leave with a variety of new ideas that you can use at your next training.

**Identifying and Dealing with Gangs**

Presenters: Wally Bump, Wisconsin Resource Center; Thomas Roberts, Wisconsin Resource Center

This workshop will provide a brief overview of gangs within the school and correctional environment. It will provide information on gang and security threat group identification, as well as current security measures to counteract gang activity.

**Recognizing Mental Illness and Strategies that Encourage Student Cooperation and Learning**

Presenter: Rich Norenberg, Wisconsin Resource Center

Participants will be provided an overview of Depression, Schizophrenia and Bi-Polar Disorders as well as typical behaviors associated with these illnesses. Participants will be introduced to strategies and techniques used to connect with, understand and effectively instruct that emphasize empathy, awareness of non-verbal communication, patience and individual instruction.

**Vocational Literacy – A Model with Results**

Presenter: Laura Reisinger, Dunn County Coordinator, Literacy Volunteers - Chippewa Valley

Come and learn about a Vocational Literacy Course that demonstrates a 43% average increase in post-test scores over pre-test scores. The resources and philosophies utilized in developing this course for the Dunn County Jail will be shared. The 12-hour course covers goal setting, attitudes & excuses, career exploration, job search techniques, resumes, cover letters and interviewing

The GED/HSED portion of the conference is scheduled for October 21-22. The Adult Literacy part is on

October 22-23. Participants may register for either set of two days for \$125 or for the entire three days for \$175.

As always, our exhibit hall vendors will have the best and most current goods and services that meet professional educators' needs.

Building on the success of previous years, CEA-W will again conduct a Silent Auction. The Silent Auction will include inmate-made items donated by Wisconsin correctional institutions, items contributed by Wisconsin Technical College schools, and items donated by Appleton area businesses. Stop in and make a bid.

The Wisconsin Association for Career and Technical Education is serving as managing partner for the conference. You will find more information, an online registration form, and an online housing form at their website: [www.wacteonline.org](http://www.wacteonline.org)

**We hope to see you in October !**

## **Jail Break 2 !**

Building on the success of this spring's Jail Educators' Training Day, Wisconsin Technical College System Education Director Peggy Meyers has announced that a *Jail Break 2* will be held in 2009. Last spring's event was attended by over 40 participants from about 30 counties.

CEA-Wisconsin is again pleased to partner with the Wisconsin Technical College System to present the Jail Educators' Training Day. The training day will be held on Friday, April 24, 2009 at the Pine Ridge Lodge in Wautoma, WI. Featured will be guest speakers, general sessions, plus plenty of opportunities to meet and share ideas with other jail workers. Added this year will be a tour of the Waushara County Jail. Training Day details and registration information will be published in this newsletter in early 2009.

The Pine Ridge offers 10 guest rooms at the state rate. More information on the variety of rooms available may be found at [www.pineridgeofwautoma.com](http://www.pineridgeofwautoma.com). If you would like to stay the night or extend your stay for a weekend getaway, contact the Pine Ridge at 920-787-5519 or 866-870-4868.

## **Creativity Contest Update**

The CEA-W Creativity Contest Committee met at the Wisconsin Resource Center on August 15<sup>th</sup> to judge the 157 entries in the 2008 Creativity Contest. Entries were received from 10 adult institutions, 3 correctional centers, 3 juvenile institutions and 4 county jails. We had a great variety of poems, essays, short stories and artwork.

Typing and layout of the book is being provided by Oshkosh Correctional Institution. Printing will again be done at Columbia Correctional. The judges included Mary Stierna, Libby Kraft and Sharon Nesemann from WRC; Susan Casper from Oshkosh Correctional; Jane Schirger from Redgranite Correctional; Lisa Packard from Racine Correctional; Linda Lentz from John Burke Correctional Center; Pandora Lobacz from Lincoln Hills School; Jason Brost from Southern Oaks Girls School; and Conrad Reedy from Kettle Moraine Correctional. Mark Terpening from Columbia Correctional was unable to attend the judging, but will oversee the printing at Columbia. Distribution of the books to all winners and CEA-W members should take place in January, 2009.

by: Mary Stierna, WRC

# Risking Their Futures: Why Trying Nonviolent 17-Year-Olds as Adults Is Bad Policy for Wisconsin

*The following policy brief is a publication of the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families, and was made possible with the generous support of the Campaign for Youth Justice and the Public Welfare Foundation. The brief was researched and written by WCCF Policy Analyst Wendy Henderson, who can be reached at [whenderson@wccf.org](mailto:whenderson@wccf.org). The entire brief may be found at [www.wccf.org](http://www.wccf.org).*

Seventeen-year-olds make mistakes—a lot of them. But we have all been 17 and have made mistakes, and most of us have moved on to become productive members of society. Twelve years ago, however, the mistakes of 17-year-olds in Wisconsin were transformed from childish indiscretions to permanent blots on their records.

In 1996 Wisconsin changed the state's juvenile justice landscape by excluding 17-year-olds entirely from the juvenile court. Initially this was an effort to save resources and improve community safety by incarcerating older teens as adults, under the theory of "adult crime, adult time." At the time of the legislative change, there was little research to suggest that trying youth as adults would improve community safety. Since then, research has effectively contradicted the premise that the change would make communities safer.

According to a recent study published by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, trying youth under 18 in the adult criminal justice system significantly increases crime and has a negative impact on community safety. Both in Wisconsin and nationally, the data speaks volumes: Trying youth as adults creates more crime. To better understand the long-term consequences in Wisconsin of trying all 17-year-olds as adults, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families analyzed the criminal histories of 1,000 17-year-olds from 2001 through 2007.

## WCCF Analysis of 1,000 17-year-old offenders

The outcomes for the 1,000 17-year-olds analyzed in this paper were troubling. WCCF reviewed the records of 1,000 17-year-olds convicted in 2001 to ascertain how many committed a new crime before September, 2007. Seventy percent of the youth whose records were reviewed were convicted of a new crime within the follow up period. Thirty percent did not re-offend. Reconvictions were equally split between felonies (34.3%) and misdemeanors (35.2%). Of the recidivists, over half were convicted of more than one crime in the follow up period.

The sample included 169 females and 812 males, and was 23% youth of color and 67% Caucasian. 10% of youth had no information on race/ethnicity, and 2% had no information on gender.

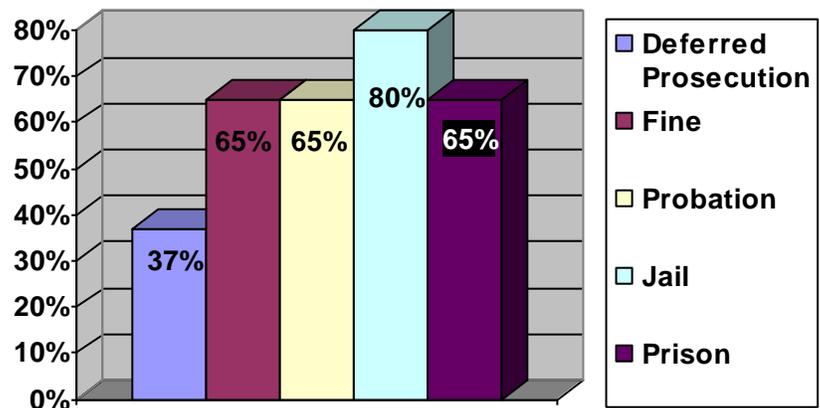
The most common sentence for 17-year-olds sampled was a jail sentence (41%), followed by probation (23%), a fine (18%) and prison (12%). Deferred prosecution was rarely utilized in the sample population (5%). More than half of the cases resulted in sentences to some sort of confinement, either jail or prison, even though 78 percent of offenders studied were convicted of misdemeanors.

Outcomes for 17-year-olds varied depending on their sentences (see Chart 1). Deferred prosecution yielded the lowest recidivism rate at 37 percent; it was the least common disposition, offered to only 5 percent of offenders. The most frequent sentence, jail, produced the highest recidivism rate at 80 percent.

Upon closer examination of the jail's ability to serve 17-year-olds, it is not surprising that youth with jail

sentences are the least likely to stay out of trouble after their release. According to data presented in the Legislative Audit Bureau’s analysis of 17-year-olds in the adult system, few services are available in the adult jail system. Chart 2 compares the number of 17-year-olds admitted to adult jails in selected counties with the number of those youth who were provided an education. The number of students served varied greatly by county. In each instance the services were less than the 5 hours per day of education that would have been standard in the juvenile system.

**Chart 1: Recidivism Rate by Disposition**



**Chart 2: 2006 Educational Services to 17-Year-Olds in Jail**

County	Brown	La Crosse	Lincoln	Milwaukee	Rock
Jail Bookings	142	104	30	1406	247
Students Served	40	2	2	897	21

**Racial Disparities in Sentencing 17-Year-Olds**

In the sample studied, African Americans made up 18 percent of the youth overall, 27 percent of the youth with incarceration orders (jail or prison), and less than 8 percent of youth with sentences of probation, fines or deferred prosecution. In all, of the 180 African American youth studied, only 35 received community sentences. In statewide and national studies, Wisconsin has been highlighted as a state where large racial disparities exist in sentencing practices. This sample appears to support that assessment. Chart 3 shows the dispositions by race and ethnicity.

**Chart 3: Dispositions by Race and Ethnicity**

	Jail or Prison	Fine, Probation or Deferred Prosecution
African American	80%	19%
American Indian	60%	40%
Asian	33%	66%
Caucasian	46%	53%
Hispanic	52%	42%
No Info	50%	50%
Average for All	54%	45%

The most troubling racial disparities arise when comparing custody orders (jail or prison) versus community-based orders. As shown in Chart 4, while African Americans are charged with mostly misdemeanors, the vast majority of sentences result in incarceration. Nearly three-quarters (71%) of the African American youth who were charged with misdemeanors were sentenced to incarceration. Among the African American youth who were incarcerated, more than half were charged with misdemeanors.

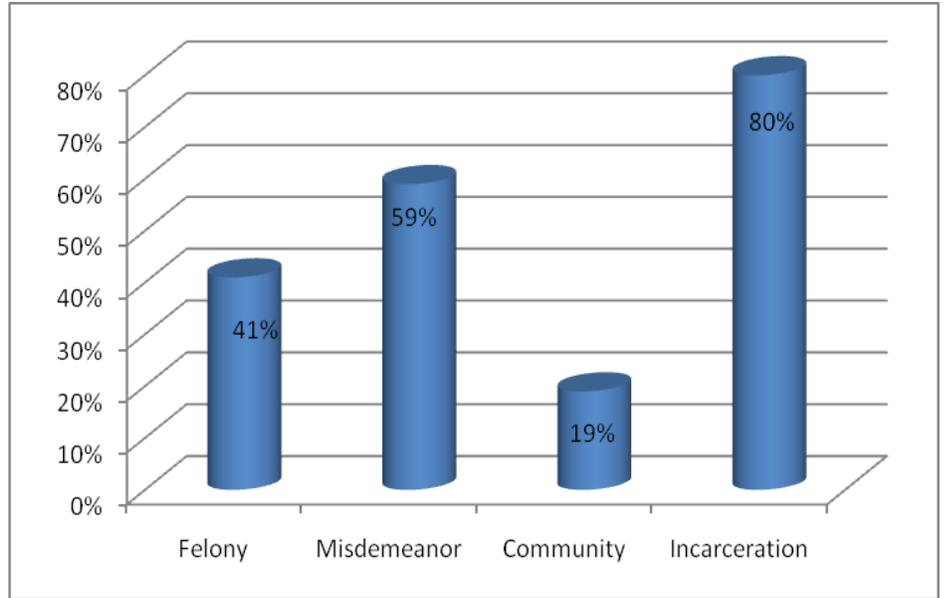
Comparing Caucasians and African Americans on sentencing reveals a wide disparity. Few African American youth in our sample were given the opportunity for rehabilitation in a community setting; nearly all were sentenced to some sort of incarceration.

The Governor’s Commission on Reducing Racial Disparities in the Wisconsin Justice System studied the problem of minority overrepresentation in prison and came up with a number of recommendations.

One recommendation was to return 17-year-olds to the juvenile court, while retaining judges' flexibility to try those accused of more serious crimes in the adult system. The report stated:

*“Consistent with the results of the January, 2008 Legislative Audit report, legislation should be introduced to return jurisdiction of 17 year olds alleged to have violated state or federal criminal laws to juvenile courts. Current waiver provisions should be maintained.”*

**Chart 4: Charges and Sentencing among African Americans**

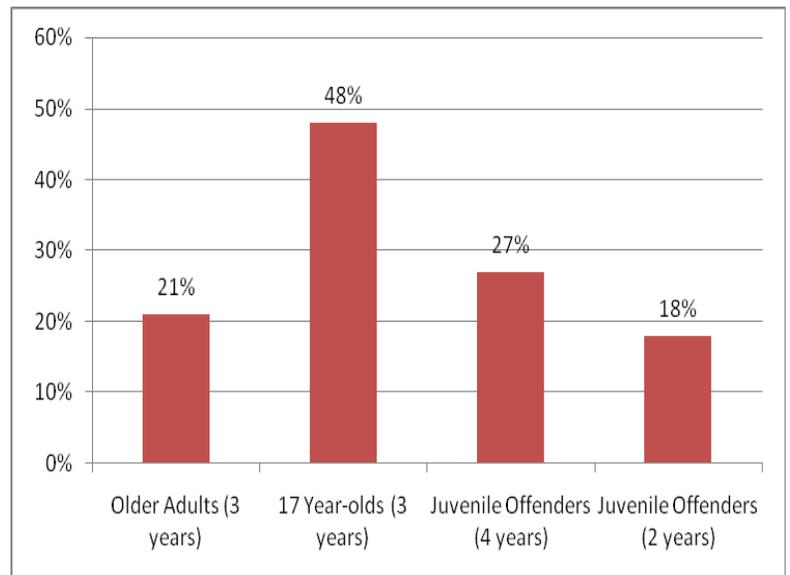


## Recidivism in the Corrections Populations

The Wisconsin Legislative Audit Bureau (LAB) released a report in January of 2008 that used Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) data to compare the recidivism rates of 17-year-olds in adult corrections to those of younger and older offenders (see Chart 5). They studied both the volume of re-offenders (recidivism rate) and the severity of re-offenses. According to the DOC data used in the audit, nearly half of the 17-year-olds released from adult prison in 2002 were reincarcerated within three years.

Significantly, the recidivism rate for 17-year-olds incarcerated in adult prisons was nearly double that of younger teens treated in the juvenile system, despite the longer follow up period for the juvenile offenders. Likewise, the volume of subsequent offenses is higher for 17-year-olds than for any other age group.

**Chart 5: Recidivism in Corrections Populations**



Data from WCCF's study of 1,000 offenders is consistent with data from the LAB study and national research: Trying youth under 18 as adults produces very high recidivism rates and therefore compromises community safety. In light of this research, we must reevaluate current practices and make smarter choices about our treatment of 17-year-olds in the justice system.

## Solutions

Trying all 17-year-olds as adults for any crime has been a mistake. We must return 17-year-olds accused of nonviolent crimes to the juvenile justice system so they can get the treatment they need to change behavior and move on to adulthood without the mark of an adult criminal record. The adult system lacks the kind of resources for education and rehabilitation found in juvenile system. Instead of receiving the services they need, youth in the adult system end up receiving an adult criminal record that sticks with them the rest of their lives.

## President's Message

Our last board meeting was held at Fox Lake Correctional Institution. We had a tour of the institution and I was amazed at all the programs that FLCI offers! I always find it interesting to tour other institutions and to see the programs at different facilities. Since I am not a Department of Corrections employee, it is nice to see where my students come from, or where they are going to after they leave the Resource Center. Thank you to Chris Eplett at FLCI for hosting us and giving us a tour, and thanks to all the teachers at FLCI who took a few minutes to explain their programs to us.

Since our last newsletter, the CEA Creativity Contest Committee met and we selected entries for the 2008 publication. It was a nice day of meeting with correctional educators from all over the state. We received many excellent entries and we are thankful to Oshkosh Correctional for doing the typing and the layout for the book.

We have some excellent workshops that have been proposed for the upcoming annual GED/HSED and Adult Literacy Conference at the Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton. We have several members presenting workshops at the conference and the topics sound very interesting! I hope many members get the opportunity to attend. Please look for our Silent Auction at this conference, it always a great place to take a break and find a deal.

We are also looking forward to the Annual CEA Conference to be held in Madison in 2009. Ideas are being generated and I want to thank all the members that have sent in ideas for the conference. There is a lot of planning going on for the remainder of this year and for 2009. It is a great time to be a CEA member in Wisconsin. The upcoming year is going to be truly exciting!

by: Mary Stierna

**CEA-Wisconsin News Review**  
**Sharon Neemann, CEAW Secretary**  
**Wisconsin Resource Center**  
**P.O. Box 16**  
**Winnebago, WI 54985**

