Jennifer Bautz joined the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC) Education Department in June 2017, becoming WRC’s first music teacher. Although she had a Bachelor of Music and Education degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, 38 post-graduate credits and 22 years of teaching experience in the Lomira and West Allis-West Milwaukee School Districts, Jen was new to working with inmates.

Characterizing Jen’s arrival at WRC, Corrections Program Supervisor Mary Vande Slunt commented, “As a true pioneer, Jen was faced with limited resources, little direction, and the unfamiliar rules and expectations of a secure treatment facility. Even with many hurdles over the past few years, Jen has worked hard to create a meaningful and solid music program for all offenders in our care.”

In recognition of Jen’s innovation, dedication and tireless work, the CEA-Wisconsin Executive Board is proud to name Jennifer Bautz as the 2020 Wisconsin Correctional Teacher of the Year.

Upon starting her work at WRC, Jen rapidly developed a comprehensive music program from the ground up. This includes 19 new adult music education classes and their curricula based on the interests of students and suggestions from other staff. The classes include: Piano, Guitar, Choir,
Musical Theater, Drum Circle, Music History, Composer a Day, Music Theory and Composition, Music Around the World, Holiday Traditions, Musical Styles, Tone Chimes, Unit Music, and Drama. On both the men’s and women’s units at WRC, the music continues to grow and blossom. There are constant waiting lists for many of Jen’s classes.

WRC is a secure treatment facility operated by the Department of Health Services which treats offenders with significant and persistent mental health needs. Jen’s music classes offer them much more than a leisure activity. Among the health benefits that Jen achieves by involving inmates in music activities are improving visual and verbal skills, heart health, happiness, sleep quality, keeping an aging brain healthy, boosting immunity, and reducing depression and anxiety. Many of Jen’s students have expressed that they have added patience, better moods, lower levels of anger, decreased levels of depression, a healthy way to release stress, gained comradery, better coping skills, socialization as well as increasing overall happiness.

Jen works closely with unit programs and treatment teams to meet the unique needs in multiple treatment areas by incorporating musical activities into everyday wellness plans. The addition of music classes at WRC was added in mindfulness training and added resources for trauma-informed care. Inmates working on recovery from substance use disorders have found a purpose, sense of belonging, and newfound goals to work toward. As inmates release into the community, many have found homes in church or community choirs, taking online lessons, and engaging in a healthy leisure activity as they navigate a sober lifestyle.

One inmate stated, “I took this class because I wanted to learn something that I believe my childhood was robbed of due to all of the foster families, group homes, and treatment centers.” Jen believes, “Utilizing music as a creative outlet gives them back that lost opportunity of youth.”
When asked to describe her educational philosophy, Jen responded:

*I believe that all students are unique individuals that must have an enthusiastic and stimulating educational environment where they are free to grow mentally, emotionally, and socially. It is my desire to provide this type of atmosphere so my students can reach their full potential. A classroom should be a place where one feels safe, not only physically, but mentally as well in order to express themselves, embrace differences of others, and try new things. It is important to foster a climate where equity and mutual respect are intrinsic. I acknowledge different learning styles and adapt to reach the visual, oral, and tactile learner. Teaching provides an opportunity to create lifelong learners, a process where one embraces new strategies, ideas, and philosophies throughout a lifetime.*

In addition to teaching music classes and being involved in treatment programs, Jen acts as co-master of ceremonies at WRC’s recognition ceremonies. She makes sure everything is in order, finds inspirational stories and quotes to share, introduces guest speakers, and organizes choir, drama, piano, guitar, and tone chime performances.

Jen has also added music to both inmate and staff holiday celebrations. This provides a great opportunity for her students to showcase their musical knowledge and talents and adds joy during what can be a difficult time of year for WRC residents.

Although Jen has been working at WRC for only a few years, she has already assumed a key role in providing staff training. Jen has informed new employees about the education classes available at WRC and the many benefits of correctional education. She became a skills coach in Dialectical Behavior Therapy as well as a facility-wide trainer for Limits and Listening. Jen contributes to WRC’s Trauma Informed Care Initiative and the Applying Wellness and Recovery Everyday (AWARE) personal health plans. Jen has also been a facilitator in the Training for Trainers staff development program.

One of Jen’s colleagues described Jen as “a dynamic, authentic, and passionate individual who has a positive attitude no matter what. Her energy and enthusiasm for her work is beyond
compare. She always has a smile on her face and a pleasant greeting for everyone she interacts with."

A fellow teacher shared, “Jen’s music program is incredible. Her program blurs the lines between what is education, treatment, and therapy. Jen’s program has given me a much deeper appreciation for the power that fine arts and music can have on mental health and socio-emotional regulation!”

Emily Propson, Education Director at WRC, shared: “WRC has a rich tradition for utilizing creative interventions to meet the needs of our clientele. Historically, we had teachers and recreation therapists provide musical opportunities for our residents, but never before a DPI certified music teacher. Jen entered our facility with high expectations and even bigger ambitions, and she has exceeded my every hope of what a music program could do within a facility like WRC. Our facility as a whole is noticeably richer for having Jen’s passion, dedication, and creativity put into her classes, events, and performances.”

"She is truly a visionary and has worked exceptionally hard to create a variety of meaningful opportunities for our offenders to listen to, learn, practice, and perform various forms of music while at WRC," says WRC Director Sue DeHaan. "Jen’s work also demonstrates to the persons in our care how to utilize music as a coping skill and/or as a healthy leisure activity both while incarcerated and upon release."

The CEA-Wisconsin Executive Board is pleased to recognize Jennifer Bautz as the 2020 Wisconsin Correctional Teacher of the Year. She will receive a plaque and a $250 stipend. Jen will be furnished expenses to represent Wisconsin at the Region 3/4 CEA Conference on April 19 -21, 2020, in Bloomington, Minnesota. If she is selected as the Region 3 Teacher of the Year, Jen will be furnished expenses to attend the 75th Annual CEA International Conference on August 23-26, 2020, at the Renaissance Austin Hotel in Austin, Texas.
What a rapid evolution of COVID-19 precautions we’ve witnessed in the past few days!

Recently, CEA-Wisconsin President Emily Propson released this email:

*Due to growing concerns about the COVID-19 virus, we are choosing to be proactive and socially responsible in postponing the 2020 CEA-W Conference and Training Day. We are working with the Madison Concourse to find dates to reschedule the event for the late summer or fall. Once the new dates have been determined we will notify all registrants, presenters, and exhibitors. If the new dates do not work with your schedule, we will work with individuals to reimburse paid registrations.*

*To avoid flooding the Madison Concourse with guest room cancellations - all hotel rooms booked under the CEA-W block will be automatically cancelled.*

*We sincerely appreciate your interest in the CEA-W Conference and Training Day and thank you for your understanding and patience during this uncertain time. We look forward to seeing you later this year!*

**Other CEA Events**

The 2020 CEA Leadership Forum scheduled for March 29-31 in Tucson, Arizona and the Region 3 & 4 CEA Conference & Training Event scheduled for April 19-21, 2020 in Bloomington, Minnesota has also been cancelled. As of the publishing of this newsletter, there has been no statement on the status of the 75th Annual CEA International Conference & Training Event scheduled for August 23-26, in Austin, Texas. Check [www.ceanational.org](http://www.ceanational.org) for the latest information.

**COABE Conference Postponed**

Due to concerns surrounding the COVID-19 virus, COABE is exploring options to reschedule the 2020 COABE Conference that was scheduled for April 5-8, 2020 at the Marriot Waterfront in Baltimore, Maryland. COABE is working with its venues to find agreeable dates within the next few months to host COABE 2020 in Baltimore.
Pony Express, USPS, Telephone, Newspapers, Magazines, Internet. The world of communications has been in perpetual change. Changes within the last 10-20 years have been experiencing exponential growth. There is a really interesting TED talk from Patrick Forth that suggests that new technologies will change every 18 months. The point here is that the world is changing, especially in the way that we access and use information. The core of learning is accessing and assimilating information and demonstrating it to others or in a new context. This article is about how the DOC has attempted to incorporate this exchange in a security-focused environment that, by its nature, needs to create barriers to the exchange of content for good reasons having to do with potential victimization and security.

Since coming to the DOC in April of 2018, I have been very impressed by the overall attitude of including technology into the learning process. Without the attitude of finding a “yes”, we would not have been able to get to the point we have reached. If you are in a place where you want to use more technology or want to better understand what is used or what is possible, it is easier to break “technology” into parts. The parts of a tech system include the hardware (PCs, Laptops, Chromebooks, Clearbooks, Mouse, Keyboard, etc.), the software (programs we use to do stuff such as MS Word, Adobe, and Outlook), the operating system (Windows, Chrome/cloud ready, Linux), and the network. For people using the systems, they want to turn on their computer, have it work for what they want to do and have no need to know how everything works. The problem with this thinking is that we are used to things working a certain way at home that don’t work the same way while at work.

Personally, when thinking about adopting new technology, I start with a basic problem. I then imagine what would happen for the end user if that problem were solved. I then look at how to implement this solution. There are three examples of this we have developed in the past two years at DOC, mostly with our 2nd Chance Pell Pilot program with Milwaukee Area Technical College. Those are explained on the following pages.
Problem 1 - Students across the state getting work to instructors in Milwaukee

With the use of RACHEL devices, DOC opened access to content that could be changed on a regular basis and allowed modules developed by Milwaukee Area Technical College instructors to be added. Students watched videos, read articles/textbooks and responded to course work. They would go into their living units, handwrite responses, come to school to type responses, save them to a flash drive and have the coordinator email the instructor. The instructor would grade or provide feedback and send it back to the coordinator who reversed the process to give it back to the student. Not efficient. We needed a direct connection from student to teacher without email. We adopted a learning management system. It doesn’t matter what system you use; there are many out there. The DOC will allow a website if it is a dedicated IP address that doesn’t use content from other sites (you can’t link a YouTube video to a lesson path as that jumps to YouTube even if it is embedded in your presentation). With our LMS system, our instructors can post new content when they find it and students can submit questions and assignments directly to them without using the DOC coordinator.

Problem 2 - The use of textbooks as the primary source of information

Textbooks are difficult to order, expensive, don’t change frequently, and are hard to distribute each semester. We had a goal to eliminate the use of textbooks. A major shift happened in the DOC with the use of a vendor-based commissary tablet to allow inmates to order commissary and add entertainment (music, videos) to what they can purchase. The tablets opened the door to using personal hand-held devices within the living units, but they were neither robust enough to handle college level materials, nor were they interested in providing open access materials without fees. We considered several types of personal devices, but all needed to be connected to a network to function. We landed on a device that we have named “Clearbooks.” The Clearbooks can be used in the living unit. They have a clear plastic chassis and no external ports except for power, headphones, and a docking port. This is important because a smuggled USB device can be used to store contraband content or include the ability to create a network to “talk” to other computer users. Students arrive at school and dock their device. The docking station gives them access to our inmate network which houses our LMS site, the FAFSA online...
application portal, and RACHEL. Students may download any resources they need for the classes they are enrolled, with a storage capacity of 200 GB. That means they can download all the textbooks for class, new videos, supporting videos, audio files and any content they need. They can take those back to the living unit to view and use. They also have a blank Google doc to use no storage on the Google account, and just specific resources such as Docs, Sheets, and Slides. All Google domain resources are managed by our tech department. With Cloud Ready, only resources within our play account can be used to type assignments, save to their device and upload to the LMS when they get back to school. There is no network storage. To back up their materials, inmates have personal space on the LMS.

**Problem 3 - Some classes require a personal connection to the instructor**

We are currently using at least one telepresence unit in each of our Pell sites. There are a lot of options in this element (Google “classroom video conferencing”), but the DOC uses Polycom. Polycom allows an instructor to teach class to several sites all at once. We have used this for World Language and Calculus classes. We have also used this system for 1-1 tutoring with a graduate student. The old remote learning systems were on analogue TVs with one screen per site/person. It was like watching TV which is a very passive process. The new technology and HD delivery makes it seem as though you are talking with someone through a window.

**The Future**

The future of technology within the DOC includes using the telepresence network to facilitate state-wide meetings with teachers about content and curriculum, expanding telepresence to all sites for use in our ABE courses, and hosting our own LMS system so that DOC teachers may use the same features to teach from their respective locations. I am always open to discussing ideas about expanding the use of technology as a delivery tool for educational content, so please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions. Regardless of the technology we use, the single most important factor in educational attainment is the relationship between the instructor and the learner. This important fact must stay front of mind when thinking about how technology can be used to enhance instruction.

You may contact me to discuss your ideas at: BenjaminW.Jones@wisconsin.gov or 608-240-5165.
Since the day he learned to hold a pencil, Michael Vue has loved to draw. Growing up, he’d fill notebooks with custom logos and then print them onto his bargain clothes, to make them look name-brand. Art was more than his preferred career path. It was his life.

But Vue had a second preoccupation that threatened to unravel his first: drugs. For a decade, Vue bounced in and out of jail as he racked up charge after charge after charge. It was a cycle of addiction and self-sabotage, he said, that never seemed to end.

Then, during a jail stay a couple years ago, Vue enrolled in Project Proven through Western Technical College. The program brings Western instructors into the La Crosse County Jail, where they help inmates communicate more effectively, write resumes and cover letters, and develop a plan for their reintegration into society — whatever they need to be successful and employable.

Vue, one of the program’s high achievers, just finished his first semester in Western’s graphic design program. He’s taking sobriety seriously, getting counseling from Driftless Recovery Services. And he has plans, after earning his degree, to open his own clothing store.

“I’ve been doing a lot for myself and my future lately, which is something I’ve never really done before,” Vue, 28, said. “Project Proven has given me so much confidence and set me up with all these opportunities. Without it, I really think I’d be back in prison.”

Project Proven started as a grant-funded program in 2013, and has reached hundreds of La Crosse County inmates during the past six years. Case managers from Western are in the jail 10 to 20 hours each week, working with people who are at a true crossroads in life. Some, like Vue, have spent as much time in jail or prison as they’ve spent on the outside. Some never learned to read or perform basic math, and have never believed they could find steady, honest work.
“Rather than looking back into their past, we want these men and women to look forward to the future and really create their own future,” said Colin Walsh, Project Proven’s program coordinator. “We’re trying to create that momentum right as they’re getting out of jail, so that we can either connect them with an employer or get them enrolled as a Western student. The more things we can connect them to, the more they’ll have to lose.”

Over the years, Vue had his share of false starts as he tried to get sober and make something of himself. Every time he seemed to have a little traction, he said, he’d feel the urge to get high again. In short order, he’d be back in jail, and his dreams would feel that much more unattainable.

“I couldn’t understand why I was making these impulsive decisions, even though I knew what the consequences were,” Vue said. “Finally, I decided to start learning about myself, start acknowledging that I had an addiction. I still get those urges, but now I have people I can talk to about them.”

Vue initially saw Project Proven as a good excuse to get out of the blocks, if only for an hour or two. Sitting in class, though, he was quickly struck by the authenticity of his case manager, Dillon Mader. Mader, he said, didn’t just lecture inmates about employment skills or give them brochures for addiction treatment centers. He seemed to have a genuine interest in them.

“Every time I talked to him, it felt like I was the only one and that I really mattered,” Vue said. “He helped me set goals for myself, and every time I reached one, it gave me more confidence. It was easy to continue with it after I was released, because they gave me hope.”

While inmate education programs are common in prisons, they’re exceedingly rare in jails, because turnover is so high and so rapid. The average stay in the La Crosse County Jail is 10 days.

Western circumvents this issue by targeting people who are in jail not for weeks, but for months,
and who show a willingness to improve themselves. This fall, Western’s Credit for Prior Learning program awarded college credit to three inmates who had demonstrated a range of competencies by completing an interview and a personal portfolio. It’s believed to be the first time someone has earned college credit while incarcerated in La Crosse County.

“It’s a foot in the door that can help people make a big change in their lives,” Mader said. “A lot of these people … their parents had nothing, and so they have nothing. No housing, no clothes, no food. This gives them some momentum before they even hit the ground.”

Mike Kiefer, the program coordinator in the La Crosse County Jail, said he’s already noticed a change in perspective among some of the inmates. “A lot of them used to say, ‘I’m a convicted felon, and I’ll never find a job,’ ” he said. “But with Project Proven — and the improved economy, too — you rarely hear inmates talk like that. They call each other out and say, ‘There’s plenty of jobs out there. You just need to work for it, and you can get a decent job for yourself.’ ”

As he chases his own aspirations, Vue hopes he has spent his last day behind bars. A decade of his life wasted, he said, is more than enough.

But crime and punishment are still a part of his life — and not just because he’s participating in the county’s drug court program. While many of Vue’s family members have embraced him and applauded his efforts to change, some have not, because they are in prison themselves.

Vue has two brothers who are currently serving sentences and a third who, while free now, is frequently getting in trouble. “I’m trying,” he said, “to set the best example I can for them.”
Writing a New Future: Inmates Find Hope while Earning College Credits

In the cover article of the February 20, 2020 Isthmus newspaper, Pat Dillon chronicles the transformational effect that participation in Odyssey Beyond Bars classes at the Oakhill Correctional Institution (OCI) has had on two incarcerated students, their UW-Madison instructor and the co-directors of the Odyssey Beyond Bars project. The following is a condensed version of the article. The quotes and passages are used with the permission of the author.

In “Writing a New Future: Inmates Find Hope while Earning College Credits”, reporter Pat Dillon traces the experiences of Carl Lewis and Jacob Raglin from their initial sentencing through the intellectual growth they experienced while incarcerated. Carl’s transformation included teaching himself to read and earning a GED, completing vocational classes at OCI, and participating in the Oakhill Humanities Project, a series of non-credit-bearing poetry, writing and philosophy classes.

This past fall Lewis took his first college course. He and 14 other men were selected to participate in Odyssey Beyond Bars. The course is a branch of the community-based UW Odyssey Project, a free six-credit humanities course offered through the UW Department of Continuing Studies that jump-starts an educational path for economically disadvantaged adults.

One night a week the men met to read essays and to write their own. By completing the course they now have three UW credits in English, which can satisfy the communications requirement at four-year UW System schools. But for Lewis, and many of the other Oakhill students, the class was as much about community building and personal development as it was about earning college credits. “It provokes something in you that makes you want to dig into who you are and question who you are,” says Lewis.
Another student chronicled by reporter Pat Dillon is Jacob Raglin. “I steered away from my abilities when I was in school,” says Raglin, who trained and worked as a carpenter. “I thought I lacked the ability [for] reading and writing and poetry, I just didn’t do it. So that steered me in a different direction — instead of thinking, ‘Hey I’m going to read a book today,’ I was like ‘I’m going find my friends and go hang out at the bars.’ Odyssey has changed that in me.”

Raglin says when he’s released, Odyssey Beyond Bars will be the reason he’ll fulfill a dream of going to college. Before Odyssey, Raglin says he’d only read about 20 books in his life. The rigorous Odyssey coursework has changed that. He’s already applied to seven colleges and is confident he’ll attend UW-Whitewater. He has also applied to be in Madison’s community-based Odyssey Project next fall.

Transformational Teaching
Kevin Mullen, co-director of the Odyssey Project, taught the pilot Odyssey Beyond Bars class. Mullen, who has been a writing instructor for 18 years, says this class has been as profound for him as for his students.

“I have been teaching for a long time.” Mullen says of his students. “They want to have these conversations, they want to put everything into their essays, they want to do first and second drafts, and over two-thirds are coming in every week to work with the tutors,” he adds, referencing the volunteers who come to Oakhill weekly to help the men with their writing. “That desire has been so strong, it’s shaped my experience. I’ve been just as transformed as they have, if not even more so.”

Origin of Odyssey Beyond Bars
The Odyssey Beyond Bars program was conceptualized by Peter Moreno, a former clinical law professor who worked for the Wisconsin Innocence Project and went on to become the director of the Innocence Project Northwest in Seattle. While in Washington, Moreno witnessed the
transformational power of higher education in prisons through a nonprofit called University Beyond Bars. When he and his wife returned to Madison last year, he wanted to see if something similar was possible in Wisconsin.

“When I would visit legal clients in prison, I would often leave the building with a sense of loneliness and desperation,” says Moreno. “But after attending a University Beyond Bars class, and hearing students talk about what they were learning and how it impacted their vision for the future, I left with a sense of hope, and I thought to myself, my goodness, this is wonderful.”

Moreno approached Walter Dickey, a UW Law School colleague who directed the Wisconsin Division of Corrections from 1983-87, to gauge the university’s interest in providing free accredited education to inmates. Along the way he learned that the university had been active in teaching non-credit courses for nearly a decade through the Oakhill Prison Humanities Project and the UW Odyssey Project.

But Moreno found a near total absence of credit-bearing courses in prison throughout the UW System since former President Bill Clinton signed legislation in 1994 that ended federal Pell Grant funding for incarcerated students. He was determined to forge ahead, based on what he had witnessed in Washington.

Moreno’s experience with hundreds of legal interviews he conducted with men and women in prison, led him to one conclusion: “The intellectual capacity of people in prison matches the intellectual capacity of people on the outside. So that begs the question, why are we not affording them the same educational opportunities?”

Why Fund Felons?
Wisconsin DOC Secretary Kevin Carr says higher education levels reduce the recidivism rate and help alleviate public safety concerns. He says he’s “extremely excited” to have Odyssey programming, not just in Oakhill, but potentially in corrections facilities around the state. “Research shows that the higher the educational level that a person in custody achieves, on average, that will increase not only the safety of the staff at those facilities, but helps the [inmate’s] personal growth and ability to reenter society with better skills,” says Carr.
Jerome Dillard, director of Ex-Incarcerated People Organizing, well known in criminal justice reform circles for encouraging incarcerated people to “turn their cells into a classroom.” “It is proven that formerly incarcerated people who seek post-secondary education have a low recidivism rate,” says Dillard. “I have known dozens of formerly incarcerated people who have graduated from the community Odyssey program who have not gone back [to prison]. Being incarcerated is a time for these people to sit down and plan their lives. Education, especially accredited education, gives them hope for a successful future.”

Due to an Executive Order issued by President Obama, Pell Grants are once again available to incarcerated students for education at designated schools. The U.S. Department of Education will be evaluating these programs to see the impact education has on the lives of participants.

Moreno, in conjunction with UW-Madison, has applied for the university to become a Second Chance Pell Experimental Site, which would allow it to offer bachelor’s degree programs to students in prison. Moreno says Odyssey Beyond Bars would “expand substantially” if the university is selected as a site. “The application alone is an important step forward for the university and our efforts to support this group of learners.”

Meanwhile, Odyssey Beyond Bars is committed to offering two more English 100 courses at Oakhill over the next two years. And Moreno says the Odyssey team is working with university leaders to plan additional courses at Oakhill, including a potential African American studies course this summer.

The Magic of the Odyssey Project

Much of the magic of the Odyssey Project course seems to come from instructor Kevin Mullen, who the students applaud for bringing an energy, authenticity and a sense of trust that “makes them want to do well in class.” Mullen is one they see as “willing to reach out.”

To support the students’ work beyond the classroom, Mullen collects their writings into a literary pamphlet called *The Oracle*. The fact that he would be published in *The Oracle* pushed Carl Lewis to dig deeper in his writing. “*The Oracle* makes me feel like I’m a published writer, an
author, and that’s another way I feel encouraged to keep up the work," says Lewis. “It gives you a sense of accomplishment.”

For More Information
The complete “Writing a New Future: Inmates Find Hope while Earning College Credits” article with additional Chris Bacarella photos may be found at https://isthmus.com/news/cover-story/odyssey-beyond-bars/. Pat Dillon may be contacted at: Patricia Dillon pat@patjdillon.com.

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Tell Us About Your Program
Email your article to JerryBednarowski@new.rr.com
President’s Message

This is the third draft I am writing for the President’s Message for this issue: one to stimulate excitement for the conference, the next to share my excitement and give pause due to COVID-19, and now I share with you the “it’ll be worth the wait” version! Earlier this week the CEA-W Board met to finalize conference details and within twelve hours I started thinking that perhaps we should consider postponement given the rapidly shifting environment. I am sad that the spring will go by without networking with my friends and colleagues at the CEA-W Conference, but am glad that we will have an opportunity to gather in the late summer or fall. With 40+ presenters, an impactful general session focused on lived inside-out experiences, and a nationally renowned keynote speaker, this conference is definitely worth the wait! When things calm down a bit, we will reach out to our membership regarding new conference dates. Until then, I hope that each of you can find some peace in the pause created by this pandemic. I wish you all a safe and healthy spring, and look forward to seeing many of you later this year!

Keep up the great work – and wash your hands!

Emily Propson
CEA-W Chapter President