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PARALLELS

VOLUME 1 / EDITION 3
JULY 2025

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CONTENTS

New Mexico Corrections Department
School of Culinary



"CATCHING THE CHAIN" PART 3
5

AUGUST IS NATIONAL CIVILITY MONTH
14

DON'T MISS THE BUS!
20

FIXING THE FUTURE
25

TURNING STRUGGLE INTO STRENGTH
31

WANNA BE STARTIN' SOMETHIN'
40

A REAL LIFT UP
51

"A NEW CHAPTER" BOOK CLUB
54



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"CATCHING THE CHAIN" PART 3

Career Technical Education



Obtaining career technical training allows incarcerated people to not just make a living, but to make a life on the other side of their prison sentence.

In this four-part article series, we have been discussing the various aspects of the NMCD's efforts to help returning citizens prepare for their eventual return to the outside community, as well as dispelling the myth that getting out of prison, or "catching the chain," as some call it, is something that can be distilled down to one moment in time.

The reality is that getting out of prison, in many ways, begins the moment a person arrives. All of the programming in which NMCD inmates participate from day one is geared toward improving the life that they will live on the other side of their sentence.

In parts one and two of this series, we covered how Behavioral Health Programming and Educational Programming contribute to the goal of making returning citizens' transition smoother. Now, in part three, we are exploring another way in which programming can help shape the lives of future contributing citizens: Career Technical Education.

Career Technical Education is all about training incarcerated people in vocational trades that can help propel them into not just post-release jobs, but long-term careers that can support them and their families for years to come. In many cases, establishing one's self in a trade can even provide pathways of opportunity for their children to pursue the same field.

NMCD Reentry Division Director Byron

Brown discusses the Division's Career Technical Programming:

"Career Technical Programs are not just a job; they're a career. They provide a long-term source of income for the inmates who participate in them. These programs provide training for trades that will last the entire inmate's life; if they want to pass the skill onto their kids, it just keeps going in perpetuity."

"The people we serve are folks that are going to be in our communities once they are released from prison. And so, we try to give them the tools that they need: education, a skill, a trade, so when they go out to the population, they're contributing citizens."

"My vision I see for the Department is to provide a second chance. Those incarcerated within the NMCD can sign up to get their high school equivalency; we can also, once they achieve that, ...enroll them in Career Technical Programs. For example, our Heavy Equipment Program; we have two female inmates that graduated from our Heavy Equipment Program at our Springer facility, with support from the Northern Area Local Workforce Development Board (NALWDB). They're gainfully employed right now, and they're actually working in that field. And they were able to transition from exiting the Corrections Department into those jobs, which they're working in now as productive citizens of the State of New Mexico."

***Reflections
on
Corrections***

“

***One bad chapter
doesn't have to mean
that your story
is over.***

~Anonymous

”



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NMCD Reentry Division Deputy Director Haven Scogin elaborates on Reentry's goals and the ways in which Career Technical Programming can redirect the lives of justice-involved people:

"What we're trying to do in Reentry is to really engage our population in a different way to provide supports that they need to keep them out of custody and to ensure that when they come back to the community that they're able to find a job, live successfully, have a family, and have a life that I think everyone hopes for when they're starting over. That's kind of what Reentry is; it's starting again, and you're trying to provide support for that to be successful. ...helping people focus their lives in a way that they can make actual change and have a different future than they had when they stepped in."

"New Mexico is such a huge state, but it's such a small town. Everything that happens impacts so many other people. When you're thinking about what happens to someone when they get a degree, or develop themselves educationally, or ...go through one of our Career Technical Programs, it impacts their entire family. They can now get a job that they couldn't get before; they can get a living wage that can pay bills that they couldn't pay before; support their children; step off of government assistance services; and be able to stand on their feet."

"And that pride that that client feels is then

impressed on the children that they're raising and it really helps move us in a direction that hopefully, as we continue those paces, can really stop generational crime and the issues that we have in the State of New Mexico and make big, impactful changes in families."

There's that word again: generational. As was mentioned previously, in parts one and two of this article series, exposing children to a behavior normalizes that behavior for them. And as we also discussed, modeling works both ways; it can demonstrate healthy, constructive behaviors for children, or it can normalize unhealthy, destructive patterns that ripple into the next generation. "Trickle down incarceration," might be one way to describe the negative side of that coin.

Criminal behavior is one way of life that can be passed down from one generation to the next, but so is legitimate work. Modeling any behavior causes one's children to accept it as the norm. Children who see their parents study a trade and confidently earn an honest living through that trade understand that path to be normal and are encouraged to imitate that lifestyle.

Ambrosia Garcia, who is a formerly incarcerated person currently working as the Office of Peer Recovery and Engagement (OPRE) Special Projects Admin Agent, eloquently puts it this way:



Choosing a career path and modeling a positive work ethic for one's children can help lead them down a similarly productive path.

“When you live on the streets, and you grow up on the streets, and you don’t have anybody to care or take care of you, you don’t know any better. That’s a lifestyle. I don’t feel like I was living; I feel like I was surviving. And there’s a difference.”

But Career Technical Education can make the difference between surviving and thriving not only for those who are restarting their lives post-incarceration, but for their children. A stable career means a regular paycheck, reliable housing, food stability, and a more predictable home environment for kids and adults alike. All of these conditions contribute to a family’s wellbeing in numerous ways.

Formerly incarcerated at Springer Correctional Center (SCC), Angelica discovered the promise of Career Technical Education early in her prison sentence. “Education saved me,” she says.

“[Serving time] wasn’t such a bad thing. I could either make this prison sentence hard and really, like, rebel against everyone and everything, or I could learn from this experience and better myself. People don’t realize that if you want to better yourself, there are opportunities, you know.”

The way in which Angelica chose to better herself during her time at SCC was to enroll in NMCD’s and NALWDB’s Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) Program, which is also supported by the New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED). And today, she is one of the two gainfully employed Heavy Equipment Operators that Director Brown mentioned earlier.

SCC Warden Marianna Vigil says that she has seen the Heavy Equipment Operator Program improve the lives of incarcerated participants first-hand:

“It’s very beneficial for them for when they leave the facility, and they go back into society because they’ll have a certificate and they’ll be able to get a job.”

Emily is another SCC HEO Program graduate. She’s eager to put her new skills to work upon her eventual release:

“It sets us up for the future, you know? It’s good pay and it’s good experience; they give us experience in here. So, before we even get out, they help us get a job.”

Marie, who is also a student in SCC’s HEO Program makes a good point about the employability of the formerly incarcerated and why the construction industry is a good fit for returning citizens:



Incarceration can provide an exceptional opportunity to gain new skills and even obtain vocational certification.

“Now that we’re felons, you know, there’s more job opportunities in construction than anything for felons. They have so many different things you can do, so it’s not like, you just go and you’re gonna build a house. ...When you look at the pay, like, it is good. If you put your mind to it, it’s gonna help you stay out of trouble.”

Marie also has some words of wisdom for prospective HEO Program participants:

“...If you’re gonna come into this program, come in knowing that you’re going to do something with your future, not waste their time or anybody else’s time, but try to make yourself better as an individual so when you do get out there, you know, you’re ready to go and try all these different jobs and see which one in the industry that you feel best with.”

SCC HEO student Darcy has similarly high hopes for her future in construction:

“[NMCD] help[s] find us job opportunities when we get out and a lot of that is, like, apprenticeships, or like, on-the-job learning, to where you can actually learn but you can get paid as you learn, which is a big thing too. And if you can complete an apprenticeship and, like, become a journeyman in your field, then that guarantees that you probably won’t ever really have to look for work again.”

Jeremy Boucher with Southwest Indian Foundation is one of the instructors for SCC’s HEO Program. He’s not only optimistic about participants’ post-

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incarceration job prospects, but also acknowledges the self-esteem boost that the program offers students: “The biggest thing is the confidence; once you’ve conquered this machine, I’m hoping that they take away that feeling of success with the machine and that they’re able to carry that on into other areas of their life or work life.”

For more information about the NMCD’s Heavy Equipment Program, be sure to listen to Season One, Episode One of the NMCD’s podcast, “Inside Voices,” titled “Mega Machines.” Along with all other episodes of “Inside Voices,” it is available for free on NMCD inmates’ tablets by selecting the “Information” folder.

But what if the construction field and the HEO Program don’t interest you? There are plenty of other options when it comes to Career Technical Programming, and another popular choice is NMCD’s Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Program, also offered with the partnership of the NALWDB.

Robert Romero is the HVAC Class Instructor at the Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM) in Santa Fe. An HVAC business owner himself, he has witnessed the urgent need for licensed HVAC technicians first-hand:

“Not enough guys are coming into the industry to fill positions, meaning that we can’t keep up with training, meaning that every ten guys that are leaving the industry, only two guys are coming in.”

While this may be concerning to Mr. Romero and other HVAC business owners, it’s great news for students who are seeking a high-demand trade that will translate to steady employment and job security.

Mr. Romero explains that HVAC Program students earn class hours for a state HVAC license:

“The state license could be a journeyman sheet metal worker, journeyman refrigeration worker, and also, we’re [assisting students with getting] their OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) tens and their EPA’s (Environmental Protection Agency), type one (small appliances), two (high pressure appliances), and three’s (servicing and disposal of low pressure appliances), whatever they’re interested in.”

Michael, a recent PNM HVAC Program graduate,

is hopeful about his future in the HVAC industry:

“This program’s gonna be a really good program; it is something that I’m going to take out to the streets. I’m going from knowing nothing to learning everyday. It’s gonna be a positive thing for my life.”

“I’ve learned everything from the air supply to return air, to the humidifiers, the ventilation, the ducting...”

Another PNM HVAC Program graduate, Antonio, explains what attracted him to the course:

“What drew me to this class was I have experience in the electrical field, and it also combines with the HVAC field; I just want to learn more, make myself more of an asset, and open for more job opportunities.”

Fellow student Daniel has very clear goals for himself in regard to completing the HVAC Program:

“[I’m in this program so that I can] provide for my family. This is a good opportunity and what [Mr. Romero is] bringing us and showing us is very interesting, and I believe I can do something with it.”

Angel has a similarly admirable vision for his post-graduation future:

“You know, I wanna learn something new that I can take with me to the streets to better my life as an individual, you know, and as a father for my children, as well. ...It’s amazing. It’s amazing, you know, because it’s life-changing. For me, from what I’ve seen so far, it’s gonna change my life. You know, once I get it all down and all that, and it’s gonna stop me... it’s gonna help me, whenever I get to the streets, not come back.”



Learning a trade not only sets a person up for vocational success, but can also build self-esteem and confidence.

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NMCD's wide assortment of career technical training programs allows each student to choose the job that suits him or her best.

Currently, there are sixteen Career Technical training programs available at various NMCD facilities. In addition to the aforementioned HEO Certification Program and the HVAC Certification Program, NMCD also offers:

a Commercial and Residential Technician Program (discussed in this issue's article titled, "Fixing the Future");

a Peer Support Worker Certification Program (explained in this issue's article titled, "Turning Struggle Into Strength");

an Entrepreneur Training Program (featured in this issue's article titled, "Wanna Be Startin' Somethin'");

a Forklift Certification Program (outlined in this issue's article titled, "A Real Lift Up");

a Culinary Program, including Food Handler's Certification;

an Auto Detailing Program;

a Barbering Program;

a weaving course;

computer classes;

a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Program;

a Commercial Cleaning Program;

a Horticulture Program;

a Bakery Program;

and an Automotive Technology Program.

And if you're still challenged to find a Career Technical Program that suits you, the NMCD is working on bringing these additional programs to their facilities in the coming months:

a Roofing Program;

a Wind Energy Program;

an E-Recycling Program;

an Electrical Training Program;

a Carpentry / Woodworking Program;

a Wastewater Management Program;

a General Construction Program;

and additional Career Technical courses and certifications that can be completed on inmates' state-issued tablets.

While the NMCD makes these Career Technical Programs available to those experiencing incarceration, the Department also has many partners who help ensure students' future vocational success. One of these partners is Goodwill Industries.

Samantha Chavez with Goodwill Industries explains some of the ways in which her organization facilitates the success of future job seekers:

“We’re actually meeting with individuals on the inside, and then we have that connection on the outside, and so that sets our program apart from others. Anyone who is in the facilities that we are currently in is allowed to go to our classes. So our classes are actually separate than our ‘Next Steps’ program; those are offered to anybody within those facilities.”

“...We offer a six-course curriculum, which [includes] Resume Building, Interviewing, Pillars to Success, Money Management, Stress Management, and Resiliency. Once [students have] completed those six courses, they actually get a certificate of completion and almost all [of them] are participating in creating that resume and so we actually take it back, we type it up, it’s a working resume, and we are having them add to it. And so, even their experience within – if they’re working within the facility – we are encouraging them to add it because those are all skills that are transferable on the outside.”

“What you’re showing while you’ve been working is that you’re making good use of your time. So, every single thing that you can add, where you’re adding it on a positive note, it all matters. [You’re showing that] you just didn’t sit idle; you found employment while you were on the inside, whether that’s stripping floors, working in the kitchen - those are things that are transferable on the outside and those skills matter.”

“We strategically use [specific] words when someone is incarcerated for their skills that they’ve learned on the inside. So, I ask them, ‘Where did your check come from?’ ...If you’re incarcerated in the State of New Mexico, your check came from the State of New Mexico, and that’s where you worked. So, that was your employer, and you’re going to say that on your resume. You worked for the State of New Mexico, whether you were pod porter, whether you worked in the kitchen, your check came from the State of New Mexico, and you are going to utilize that.”

“And when you have to talk about it, and when you have to elaborate, you are going to elaborate it in the way that is best suited for you, with the skills that you picked up from being incarcerated.”

Ms. Chavez goes on to explain how Goodwill Industries helps pave the way for returning citizens

to connect with employers who are open to hiring the formerly incarcerated:

“We do a lot of out-reach within the communities to find those employers. We’re not going to set you up to go apply to a place that’s not going to accept you. So, ...on the backend, we are reaching out and saying, ‘Are you willing to take somebody who has some sort of criminal background?’ And [we’re telling them,] ‘Let me show you what that success would look like for your organization and your company.’ And adding in the fact that, ‘[These applicants] have something to prove.’ And I think that those things matter because we can highlight the fact that they have a criminal record, or we can highlight the fact that they ...served their time and they still have a lot of life left to live and it can be [a] success.”

Ms. Chavez’s ultimate advice to returning citizens who will soon be reentering the job market (or who are perhaps embarking on their first legitimate work role) is both practical and inspiring:

“Don’t give up. You’re not done yet. There is still life after incarceration and there are still people rooting for you and it is not over. So, seek the support. One of the hardest questions is to ask for help. ...You did your crime, you did your time. Now allow people to help guide you because you’re not done yet.”

If you are currently incarcerated within the NMCD and are interested in any of the Career Technical Programs mentioned in this article, be sure to reach out to your Supervisor of Education (SOE) to find out how to apply.

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Inside Voices S2E5

AUGUST IS NATIONAL CIVILITY MONTH

Civility [si-vil-i-tee] noun: courtesy; politeness.

Synonyms: amiability, affability, tact



Civility is one of the essential values that allow a society to maintain its humanity.

August is National Civility Month. First established by the International Institute for Civil Leadership in 2014, it is, according to the founders, “a way to spread awareness about the need for good manners, respect, and consideration for others.”

National Civility Month emphasizes the importance of treating others with kindness, empathy, and respect. It’s an opportunity to reflect on how our actions affect those around us and to find ways to improve ourselves in this regard. It’s also a great time to evaluate whether we are applying “the golden rule” to the way we conduct ourselves in our relationships with others.

Civility is a fundamental aspect of human interaction that promotes understanding, tolerance, and cooperation. It can be demonstrated through politeness, courtesy, and awareness of others’ feelings, concerns, and wishes.

There is perhaps no other setting where civility is more important than in a correctional environment. Within the NMCD, civility is a core value that

informs our interactions with coworkers, justice-involved people, constituents, crime victims, and all other populations with whom we have contact.

Treating others with civility in a correctional environment helps prevent others from feeling disrespected, degraded, or dehumanized. It helps keep crime victims from feeling re-victimized. It allows staff, inmates, and volunteers to accomplish their respective goals in a collaborative, respectful, and cooperative manner.

By fostering respectful communication and conduct, we can create a safe space for difficult conversations, helping those with whom we interact feel acknowledged, appreciated, and more receptive to feedback. Civility, then, is the grease that keeps the wheels of human interaction spinning smoothly.

However, civility goes beyond surface-level courtesy and politeness as reflected in the dictionary definition; it profoundly impacts people’s mental health. When people are consistently treated with respect, they experience lower levels of stress and

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**“Civility, politeness, it’s like a cement in a society;
binds it together. And when we lose it, then I think we all feel
lesser and slightly dirty because of it.”**

~Jeremy Irons

anxiety. Employing kindness, respect, and civility when communicating with others can help us maintain our own composure and mental wellbeing as well. Civility, then, feeds on itself and creates a give-and-take cycle of decency and humanity.

The Latin root of the word, “civility” originated in 509 B.C. with the Romans. As democracy took root in Ancient Rome and Ancient Greece and people began to demand and receive more rights, they started devising words to describe their new republic. The term first meant “civis” or “citizen,” which referred to men with property. Over time, the word evolved to “civitas,” which referred to the “rights and duties of citizenship,” and then to “civilitas,” referencing the “art and science of citizenship” or the state of being a citizen and exhibiting good citizenship or orderly behavior.

The current English word is derived from a French root - “civilité,” which was used by members of French courts to talk about proper behavior, dress, speech, and service between the French lords and those who served them.

Then, during The Renaissance, the Age of Enlightenment broadened people’s definition of the term, and ‘civility’ came to refer to the sense of being human and acting with humanity and human decency. Educated and civilized people were expected to exhibit traits of civility, like polished manners, a love and sensitivity towards beauty, respect for absolutely everyone, and a solid adherence to honor and duty.

Today, civility is the act of being kind, polite, and respectful to others, regardless of differences in opinion, political views, socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, authoritative position, or other differences. It involves treating others with dignity, courtesy, and consideration.



Civility includes collaborating, cooperating, and discussing differences respectfully and politely.

Civility also includes:

- Speaking in an appropriate tone of voice
- Respecting others' right to express their views
- Disagreeing without disrespect
- Seeking common ground
- Listening past prejudices
- Incorporating respectful pleasantries like “please” and “thank you” into even brief or informal conversations
- Treating others with dignity and refraining from speech or actions that might make another person feel degraded
- Respecting and not pushing others’ boundaries
- Being observant and considerate
- Following “the golden rule,” or, “doing unto others as you would have them do unto you”
- Teaching others to do the same

During a recent conversation with some of the people incarcerated within the NMCD, we asked, “What does the word ‘civility’ mean to you?” Even though some were not entirely sure of the exact definition of the word, they were definitely familiar with the concept that it represents and made some really good guesses regarding the meaning of the word. Some of their answers included:

Scott: “If I can be completely honest, I don’t know what that word means.” Once told the basic

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Civility allows us to enjoy meaningful and enriching interactions, even with people we don't know personally.

definition, he concluded, "It definitely sounds like being Christ-like."

Seth: "Honestly, I couldn't tell you. I don't know." Once we explained the definition to him, he said, "[So, it's] more than being cordial. ...[It's] to be humble and kind, just like I teach my kids."

Joaquin: "That's a good question, like, when I look at the word 'civility,' I think of two words: I think of 'civilian' and being 'civil...' 'Civilian,' when I look at the word 'civility,' I think it goes down to the root word 'civil.' And ...when you look at 'civil,' I think of ethics, morals, and values... In order to be a person that is civilized, or to be civilized in society, you have to have these three major factors or keys, because if you're missing just one, it messes up the whole equation. So when I look at 'civility,' that's what I think of; how you act, how you speak, and how you think."

"...And then, to even put a bigger spin on the word 'civility,' ...I think of the word, 'integrity.' 'Cause in order for you to be a person of civil stature, I think that you have to be able to do the right thing when nobody's looking. ...'Cause people can do the right thing all the time when there's a camera on 'em, or when there's somebody directly focused on 'em, but, 'What are you gonna do when you're behind the scenes and nobody's looking?,' is the major question. ...When you said, 'civility,' I was just thinking like, the root word of 'civility' would be 'civil.' 'Civil' is where we get anything with our judicial system; anything that has any kind of moral, ethics, or a code of standards."

Shawn: "Civility,' gosh, um, I don't even know what 'civility' means, however, you know, I feel like ...the root word would be almost like 'civilian' and 'community' together ...I don't know if that would be accurate or not. ...I really feel like it would be, maybe just like reentering, you know, being cohesive

with the community after being incarcerated. You know, ...not feeling alienated. Moving forward, a lot of us, or me, myself, in prison, sometimes I feel alienated. ...I feel 'civility,' yeah, it would be like a community full of civilians."

Corey: "Basically, being a law-abiding citizen. You know, so being civil in a manner of, whomever it may be, it may be a convict or it could be in a society, you know, it could be low-class, middle-class, or high-class, so basically just conducting yourself in a civil manner."

Elroy: "'Civility...' to me, that means, 'the way you live your life in a civil manner.' That might be the first time I've ever heard that word." When asked what else might come to mind when thinking of this word, Elroy responded, "Like a civil, productive member of society, I guess."

So, no matter what the dictionary says, or how the word may have evolved, Elroy, who was admittedly unfamiliar with the word until we told him the definition, ultimately had the best advice regarding its application to life: "So I guess that applies in here and out there. [It's always a good idea to] definitely keep things civil."

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Inside Voices S1E5

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DON'T MISS THE BUS!

The “Be Pro Be Proud” Bus is Coming Back to NMCD this Month



The Be Pro Be Proud mobile vocational simulation lab will return to NMCD facilities this month, allowing inmates to explore a variety of potential career paths.

We often ask kids what they want to be when they grow up. While some children offer up a quick and confident answer like, “A fireman!,” “A ballerina!,” or “A basketball player!,” we all know that those ambitions will likely change due to the child’s evolving interests and the practicality of their choice. Many of us will find ourselves in a career that is not only different than what we had imagined for ourselves as kids, but that we couldn’t possibly have known about back then. In fact, many of us find ourselves in jobs that didn’t even exist back when we were little.

How can a kid – or an adult, for that matter - know what they want to be “when they grow up” when they don’t even know what options are available to them?

That’s where something called the “Be Pro Be

Proud” initiative steps in and introduces people of all ages to careers that had never been on their radar and futures that they could never have imagined for themselves.

In 2024, NMCD was proud to host the Be Pro Be Proud mobile vocational simulation lab for inmates, and this month, the NMCD is pleased to be hosting the tour for the second time.

Inside the state-of-the-art semi-truck trailer, inmates will once again have the opportunity to embark on a journey of immersive technical careers and skilled trades through more than a dozen hands-on simulators and virtual reality experiences. During this time, participants will have the unique opportunity to explore a variety of trade career industries including construction, excavation, welding, carpentry, robotics, fiber optics, public utilities, transportation, and more.



Welding is just one of many careers that NMCD inmates can experience virtually on board the Be Pro Be Proud vehicle.

The Be Pro Be Proud mobile workshop introduces participants to the many in-demand career fields that they may decide to explore as they approach their eventual release. NMCD Cabinet Secretary Alisha Tafoya Lucero explains: “By experiencing simulated work environments, it is our hope the inmates will walk away with a heightened sense of curiosity and eagerness about post-incarceration career opportunities.”

“In bringing this workshop to our prison facilities, we are continuing to prove our commitment to reduce recidivism rates by further strengthening our communities.”

Be Pro Be Proud is an initiative led by the New Mexico Department of Workforce Solutions (DWS) and the New Mexico Center for Economic Opportunity (NMCEO).

DWS Cabinet Secretary Sarita Nair expands on the mission of the Be Pro Be Proud campaign:

“When thinking about what career path to take, there is no better way to connect with possibilities than with hands-on experience.”

“Be Pro Be Proud gives people who will soon be re-entering communities an opportunity to explore in-demand technical careers, learn where and how to obtain training, and explore opportunities like registered apprenticeships. This initiative contributes to two goals of our State Plan – increasing outreach to justice-involved individuals and building the construction workforce - by showing these participants that good-paying careers will be accessible to them when the time

comes.”

Rob Black, President and CEO of the New Mexico Chamber of Commerce, explains how the campaign is anticipated to help returning citizens rebuild their lives:

“The great thing about Be Pro Be Proud, is that it helps spur an individual’s imagination about what they can become, where they can take their lives, as it provides the pathway to make that change.”

“We are excited to partner with the Corrections and Workforce Solutions Departments on this important effort to help returning citizens find a better future for themselves and their families.”

Manuel, a former NMCD inmate who participated in the Be Pro Be Proud campaign last year by trying his hand at various virtual vocations including utility line repair, found it to be a great experience:

“I think it’s probably the coolest thing I’ve ever done,” he says with a laugh.

And Anton, who spent some time behind the wheel of the commercial truck driving simulator, inside a virtual “cherry picker bucket” used by power line technicians, and in a fiberoptics simulator, was similarly impressed: “I think it was exciting, and it was realistic. It was almost like a game.”

When asked if the experience caused him to consider pursuing truck driving as a vocation, he responded, “[Yes.] I didn’t think I could do it; I thought it would be too hard, [but using the simulator] makes me think that I’m capable of

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Assisted by NMCD staff, an incarcerated participant gets a virtual preview of what it might be like to pursue a career in welding.

“The great thing about Be Pro Be Proud, is that it helps spur an individual’s imagination about what they can become, where they can take their lives, as it provides the pathway to make that change.”

doing it. ...The fact that I’m a felon ...I didn’t think I was going to be able to [pursue] a lot of these jobs. ...This is really an eye opener for us.”

If you are interested in participating in this immersive Career Technical experience, be sure to reach out to the Supervisor of Education (SOE) at your facility to find out how to sign up.

The Be Pro Be Proud mobile vocational simulation lab will be visiting NMCD facilities during the month of July according to the following schedule:

Tuesday, July 15 – Roswell Correctional Center (RCC) in Roswell

Wednesday, July 16 – Otero County Prison Facility (OCPF) Chaparral

Thursday, July 17 – Southern New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF) in Las Cruces

Tuesday, July 22 – Western New Mexico Correctional Facility (WNMCF) in Grants (Men’s Facility)

Wednesday, July 23 – Western New Mexico Correctional Facility (WNMCF) in Grants (Women’s Facility)

Thursday, July 24 – Central New Mexico Correctional Facility (CNMCF) Los Lunas

Monday, July 28 – Guadalupe County Correctional Facility (GCCF) in Santa Rosa

Tuesday, July 29 – Northeast New Mexico Correctional Facility (NENMCF) in Clayton

Wednesday, July 30 – The Penitentiary of New Mexico (PNM) in Santa Fe

PARALLELS

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Inside Voices S1E1



Incarcerated participants find out what it might feel like to sit behind the wheel of a big rig thanks to Be Pro Be Proud's Commercial Driver's License (CDL) simulator.

FIXING THE FUTURE

NMCD's Residential and Commercial Maintenance Technician Program Teaches Students the Basics of Common Building Maintenance

“Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention.”

~L.R. Knost



When something is broken, not working, or damaged, it feels good to be able to fix it. From family relationships to cars, computers, kitchen sinks, and furnaces, having the skills and capability to fix what's broken gives us a feeling of relief, empowerment, confidence, and self-reliance. It can even make us seem like “superheroes” in the eyes of those who need our help.

While fixing broken promises and trust might require accountability, communication, and counseling, the ability to fix mechanical things can be learned through study and hands-on practice.

The ability to fix household and commercial systems can not only enable us to become more independent, save money, and assist those around us, but it can also develop into an in-demand employment opportunity.

Building owners and tenants often don't have the knowledge, skill, or time to make their own repairs. So, of course, that's where professional “handy people” come in.

Recognizing the value and countless benefits of “being handy,” the NMCD has partnered with the Eastern Region of the New Mexico Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to bring a new program to those incarcerated within NMCD facilities: The Residential and Commercial Maintenance Technician Program.

While the plan is to eventually bring this program to more NMCD facilities, this six-week long course was just completed by a group of incarcerated men at Guadalupe County Correctional Facility (GCCF) and Northeast New Mexico Correctional Facility (NENMCF), all of whom were within six to eight months of their release. It covers six areas of building maintenance, including furnace maintenance; basic plumbing; drywall repair; fuse box repairs and maintenance; air conditioning system repairs and maintenance; and wiring systems.

The course is intended to teach students the basics of doing repairs and maintenance on these systems that do not require professional certification.



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As Haven Scogin, NMCD Reentry Division Deputy Director, explains, “This gives students a really good overview of many different areas of service that are all great to learn.”

Tony, a student in the first group at GCCF, has valued the opportunity to participate in the program and recognizes the positive ways in which it can potentially impact his future:

“I love how NMCD Education Department is giving us the tools and the opportunity to apply ourselves and put forth the effort for ourselves, teaching us to be responsible and how important it is to have [a good] work ethic. Thank you [to] those who made this program possible.”

Some of the specific skills covered in each module include the following:

Furnace Maintenance:

- Theoretical and practical lessons on basic furnace technology
- How to change filters
- How to change thermostats
- Other furnace repairs that can be done without professional certification

Basic Plumbing:

- Theoretical and practical lessons on basic plumbing
- Plumbing installation and repairs that can be done without professional certification

Drywall:

- Theoretical and practical lessons on drywall repair and fastening techniques
- How to safely install fixtures on walls
- How to repair damaged drywall
- Other drywall repairs that can be done without professional certification

Fuse Box:

- Theoretical and practical lessons on basic home and commercial wiring systems
- The basics of understanding the workings of a fuse box
- How to identify faulty wiring
- How to identify potential fire hazards
- Fuse box repairs that can be done without professional certification

Air Conditioning Maintenance:

- Theoretical and practical lessons on basic air conditioning maintenance technology
- How to change filters
- How to change thermostats
- Air conditioner repairs that can be done without professional certification

Wiring Systems

- Theoretical and practical lessons on basic home and commercial wiring systems
- How to identify faulty wiring
- How to identify potential fire hazards
- Wiring repairs that can be done without professional certification

Students who complete the program will also receive OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Association) and NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) certification. An NCCER credential demonstrates to potential employers or clients the students’ skills and competency in the construction industry, signifying that they have reached journey-level standards.

Furthermore, upon completion of the program, participants who will be releasing to the following counties may also be eligible to receive tools purchased by the Eastern Board WIOA offices that

will help jump-start their career in residential and commercial maintenance:

- Union County
- Harding County
- Quay County
- Guadalupe County
- De Baca County
- Curry County
- Roosevelt County
- Chavez County
- Lincoln County
- Otero County
- Eddy County
- Lea County

With OSHA and NCCER certifications in hand, students who complete this program have the opportunity to build a solid career on this training. But participants may also choose to use this education as a foundation on which to build a more specialized – and even more lucrative – career.



Program participants applied their newly acquired skills to framing and building this fully functioning structure that includes lighting and an operational full bathroom (toilet, shower, and running water).

Some participants might choose to start out as a handyman and eventually focus their future training on whichever trade interests them most. For example, if a student particularly enjoys the wiring module, and upon release, decides to focus their career on that area, they can enroll in an internship to become an electrician.

As Cory Hall, NMCD Career Technical Education Administrator points out, “You’ll be able to work, really, anywhere that needs any kind of fixing or taking care of. You’re going to be able to get those skills, learn how to do those skills, and ...go out and find a job doing it.”

But working as a handy person is certainly not the only option that people who complete this program will have. The list of possible career tracks is nearly endless. Some career paths that a graduate of this program might choose include:

- Self-employed handyman working for private homeowner clients (particularly for students who also complete The New Mexico Small Business Development Center’s Entrepreneurship Program, which is also available to those incarcerated within the NMCD)
- Building maintenance positions for any company that has physical offices, stores, warehouses, hotels, lodging, restaurants, or other commercial real estate
- Custodial / janitorial positions in facilities operated by government agencies or private companies
- Apartment building maintenance & repairs
- Building maintenance for residential or commercial rental companies (rental houses, commercial office buildings)
- Self-employed handyman specializing in short-term vacation rental maintenance
- Retail positions at home improvement stores, builder’s warehouses, or hardware stores
- Sales representative for companies that manufacture building supplies
- Caretaker positions for homeowners’

personal vacation properties, ranches, or estates

- Starting your own real estate business buying, repairing, and selling or renting houses (“flipping” real estate), or working for someone else who operates such a business

GCCF participants in the first cohort of this program have found it to be not only a great opportunity to expand their skillset, but to lay the groundwork for a lucrative future after their release.

Jordan, a graduate from the premier cohort, encourages any potential students to pursue the program:

“...This opportunity is seemingly, as the saying goes, ‘too good to be true.’ The reality is that it isn’t and is actually an amazing opportunity for any and all willing to undergo the challenge. This class gives you real-world and hands-on experience of framing, electrical, plumbing and other useful knowledge of various different trades. If that isn’t interesting enough, not only do you get work experience, you also get OSHA and NCCER certification, which will not only surely get you a job, it’ll most likely start you with a pay increase. All in all, for those willing to learn, this program is very informative, and I greatly appreciate the opportunity.”

Shaun, another graduate, has been equally

impressed: “The instructors [are] very knowledgeable in all forms of construction and building. I [have] learned a lot from them and appreciate the time they [take] to help us learn.”

Program participant, Dylan, also recommends the program and has high hopes for how his eventual completion of the coursework can pave a professional path for his post-incarceration life:

“So far, I’ve been learning at a good pace. We’ve already done framing, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and drywall. The instructors are doing a good job of showing us the ‘how to’s’ and ‘how not’s.’ We just started on our OSHA certification book work and it’s not as hard as I thought it would be. I’m also really thankful for the opportunities this will give me once I’m released.”

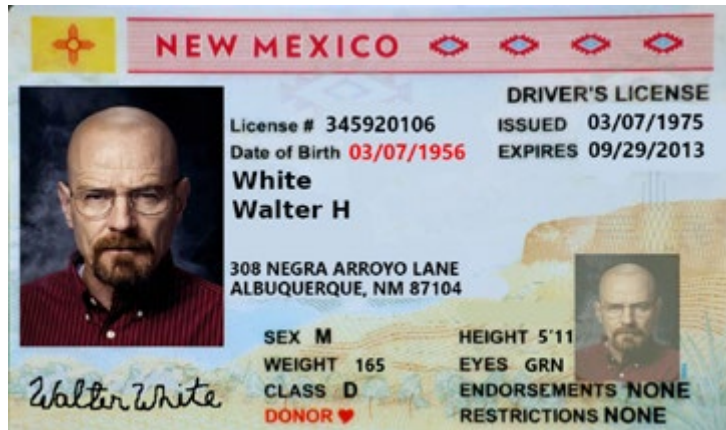
If you are interested in starting your journey toward “fixing your future” by enrolling in The Residential and Commercial Maintenance Technician Program, be sure to let your Supervisor of Education (SOE) know that you would like to participate. Regardless of the facility in which you currently reside, be sure to express your interest, because this program is expected to be expanded in the future.

PARALLELS



NMCD's Residential and Commercial Maintenance Technician Program allows participants to learn how to fix common issues with both homes and commercial buildings.

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TURNING STRUGGLE INTO STRENGTH

Inmates' Lived Experiences Prove to be Valuable Assets in Pursuing Careers as Certified Peer Support Workers



One person's recovery can not only change their own life, but can send a far-reaching ripple effect into the lives of many others thanks to NMCD's Certified Peer Service Worker (CPSW) Vocational Training Program.

For those who are in recovery, the joys of living a clean and sober life are welcome rewards for meeting the daily challenge of resisting their addiction.

For a select few of those in recovery, enjoying that substance-free lifestyle is only the first step toward fulfilling their destiny. The next step for them is harnessing the lessons that they've learned in recovery to help others do the same.

In some cases, this involves becoming a recovery sponsor, as in the organizational structure of Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous. But for those who not only want to help guide others along the path of recovery, but who also want to turn that calling into a career, there is a unique opportunity to do so through NMCD's Certified Peer Support Worker (CPSW) Vocational Training Program.

Provided in collaboration with the New Mexico

Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) and the Office of Peer Recovery and Engagement (OPRE), this program prepares participants to obtain state certification, which will allow them to eventually obtain gainful employment as CPSW's in the community.

(For more about OPRE, refer to the article titled, "Peer Factor" that appeared in Parallels Volume 1, Edition 1.)

The Certified Peer Support Worker Vocational Training Program prepares individuals who are successfully engaged in long-term recovery with mental health and / or substance use conditions and successfully maintaining their mental wellness to help others in their recovery process, both inside NMCD facilities and on the outside.

Independently Licensed Clinician Pamela K. Smith, MA LPCC and NMCD Behavioral Health Authority, explains:

“The Certified Peer Support Worker Vocational Training Program that we are doing in the New Mexico Corrections Department is a training program that’s going to prepare our inmates who have been successfully engaged in long-term recovery with mental health and / or substance use conditions to help others in their recovery process.”

“So the thought is that, because of their own recovery experiences, because of the stories they can tell, because they can be related to, the CPSW’s are what we consider – and quite frankly, what the evidence-based Behavioral Health community at large considers – uniquely qualified to enhance services delivered by provider agencies, which would be NMCD and other organizations.”

People who complete the CPSW Vocational Training Program may work inside NMCD facilities or in the community in a variety of behavioral health settings.

Ms. Smith goes on to detail some of the ways in which CPSW’s can apply their skillsets to employment opportunities in the community as returning citizens:

“New Mexico CPSW’s are employed in all types of provider settings, from reentry settings, peer-run wellness centers, managed care organizations, even

in hospital emergency rooms. There’s a multitude of positions that are being created – for example, the 988 lifeline number, which provides help for callers who are experiencing emotional, mental, or substance use distress, is manned by a lot of CPSW’s.”

Programs like this one, which encourage participants to harness their own lived experiences to help better the lives of others, have become increasingly popular as Behavioral Health Professionals have begun to realize the powerful positive influence that peers can have on one another as they approach recovery (as well as education, public health topics, the reentry process, and more). The NMCD first started adopting peer support programs as early as 2019.

Wendy Price, Psy.D., NMCD Behavioral Health Outreach Administrator, points out that the benefits of peer support models can support a variety of programs beyond those for mental health and substance use disorders:

“In our system, we use peers in a large variety of ways, within Health Services, but also within Education and Reentry. And so, this is an opportunity for those individuals who participate in these peer-led programs to actually demonstrate their competence and get an actual certification, and for a lot of them,



“One day, you’ll tell your story of how you overcame what you went through, and it will be someone else’s survival guide.”

~Brene Brown

that's work that they're already doing."

Learning from someone who has been through the very struggle that you're in "hits different." Advice from someone who has been through the fire simply resonates more than the same suggestion coming from someone who has only read about it in textbooks.

In the *Parallels* article titled, "Learning to Fly," which appeared in Volume 1, Edition, 2, Octavio, a Peer Educator for the Transition Skills course, offers this analogy for why fellow inmates are the most effective messengers to deliver the lessons of the reentry-focused class:

"In the NFL, you have more coaches that were players and they get more of a response from other players because they know how to play the game, they've played the game. So, when it comes to us, it's like, if somebody from the outside was to come in and teach this and they haven't been through prison, it's like, 'Well, what do you know about prison?' So, having that experience of being in prison gives me a testimonial of my own, you know what I'm saying? From my testimonial, I'm able to pass it on to somebody else."

Ambrosia Garcia, a former NMCD inmate, Certified Peer Support Worker, former New Mexico Peer Education Program (NMPEP) Peer Educator, former New Mexico Community Peer Education Program (NMCPEP) Community Peer Educator, and current Special Projects Admin Agent with the Office of Peer Recovery and Engagement (OPRE), echoes that same observation:

"I'm honored to be able to talk to people and help them ...with my experience and the education that I've been able to receive. Through my experience of being on [the justice-involved] side, going through the system, and then working with the system, [I'm] able to relate to them, and [say], 'Hey, I'm not a cop, I'm not the law, but I can tell you, I've experienced [the justice-involved] side of things, so tell me what's going on with you, and maybe I can get you some resources. Maybe I can help you understand that it doesn't have to be this way.'"



Ambrosia Garcia is an example of how the peer support model can transform lives both inside and outside prison facilities.

"Testimony and experience ...equip us...I personally feel like [anyone who has not been justice-involved] will [not] have a knowledge and wisdom and understanding about the struggle of being on the streets to survive, going to prison, feeling helpless and worthless and being able to survive past that. It gives you a certain knowledge, wisdom, and skill, and [an] understanding of life unlike any other."

As we've discussed in many other *Parallels* articles, each of us can model either positive or negative behavior for others and can therefore influence them in healthy or unhealthy ways. Modeling recovery – rather than mental health avoidance and substance abuse – for one's peers is a way to demonstrate to them how attention to mental health and sobriety can improve their lives the way it has improved your own. Encouraging others (whether children, family, friends, or peers) to live by your example is a powerful way to be a pillar of hope and health for others.



The peer support model recognizes that lived experiences are an asset and that receiving input from someone who has been through the struggles of recovery "hits different" than advice from someone who has not walked that path.

For those who have decided to use their own lived experiences to help others navigate recovery, the ability to earn a paycheck for doing so may seem too good to be true. But CPSW's are in fact earning a living, and "doing well by doing good."

Benefits of Certified Peer Support Workers



Empowerment:

CPSWs can help individuals regain control over their lives and build confidence in their ability to manage their mental health and substance use challenges.

Improved Outcomes:

Peer support has been shown to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health and substance use challenges, including increased engagement in treatment, reduced relapse rates, and improved overall well-being.



Reduced Stigma:



CPSWs can help reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health and substance use challenges by sharing their own lived experiences and creating a safe and supportive environment.

Increased Access to Care:

Peer support can help individuals navigate the mental health and substance use systems, increasing access to needed services and support.



Ms. Smith expands on the idea that CPSW's are able to fulfill not only their heart-felt desire to help others, but also their practical need to support themselves and their families:

“Peer support is a system of giving and receiving help that's founded in the key principles of respect, shared responsibility, and mutual agreement of what's helpful. Peer support services are programs, groups, events, and discussions within our Behavioral Health system that are led by those people - those inmates, those CPSW's – who are in recovery based on the philosophy of peer support. And a lot of the philosophy of peer support actually talks about Certified Peer Support Workers feeling that their position has been a calling. And it's giving back with service. So, it's very much a service-oriented type job.”



Support from a peer can be one of the most powerful and transformative tools for someone who is navigating their own recovery journey.

Besides the ones mentioned by Ms. Smith, some other key aspects of the Certified Peer Support Worker model include:

Lived Experience:

CPSW's have personal experience with mental health and/or substance use challenges and are in recovery themselves.

Formal Training:

They complete specific training programs to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to provide effective peer support.

Support and Guidance:

CPSW's offer support, guidance, and advocacy to help individuals in their recovery journey.

Empowerment:

They help individuals build confidence, self-advocacy skills, and resilience.

Navigating Systems:

They assist individuals in navigating the mental health and substance use systems, including accessing services and benefits.

“It is by going down into the abyss that we recover the treasures of life. Where you stumble, there lies your treasure.”

~Joseph Campbell

But how much demand is there for CPSW's in the workplace? How easy or hard will it likely be for those who complete the program to find work in the community once they're released? Ms. Smith explains that the current situation, while difficult for those seeking help, presents an extraordinary opportunity for CPSW's pursuing employment:

“You have to understand that we are in a famine right now when it comes to clinical behavioral health workers, clinicians, and social workers. For what our state needs, we just do not have the capacity to meet everybody's needs in the state. This means that there are huge opportunities for those who complete the CPSW Training Program.”

In New Mexico, the New Mexico Credentialing Board for Behavioral Health Professionals (NMCBBHP) oversees the certification of Peer Support Workers. Individuals who have committed

CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT WORKER (CPSW) TRAINING PROGRAM

**IF YOU ARE IN RECOVERY AND
WOULD LIKE TO TURN YOUR OWN
STRUGGLE INTO SOMEONE ELSE'S
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CERTIFIED PEER SUPPORT WORKER!**

"One day,
you'll tell your story
of how you overcame
what you went through,
and it will be someone else's
survival guide."

~Brene Brown

**AND CHECK OUT THE ARTICLE
IN THIS ISSUE TITLED,
"TURNING STRUGGLE
INTO STRENGTH."**



HEALTH CARE
AUTHORITY



a felony are eligible to become a CPSW, however all applicants must meet specific requirements, including:

Being at least 18 years old.

Having a high school diploma or equivalent.

Having at least three years of demonstrable mental wellness or substance use recovery.

Completing the Peer Support Worker training offered through the Office of Peer Recovery and Engagement (OPRE).

Passing the certification examination provided by the NMCBBHP.

Having 40 hours of supervised volunteer or paid work with direct client contact in a behavioral health agency.

The benefits of involving Certified Peer Support Workers in the recovery process are numerous, and include:

Empowerment:

CPSW's can help individuals regain control over their lives and build confidence in their ability to manage their mental health and substance use challenges.

Improved Outcomes:

Peer support has been shown to improve outcomes for individuals with mental health and substance use challenges, including increased engagement in treatment, reduced relapse rates, and improved overall well-being.

Reduced Stigma:

CPSW's can help reduce stigma and discrimination associated with mental health and substance use challenges by sharing their own lived experiences and creating a safe and supportive environment.

Increased Access to Care:

Peer support can help individuals navigate the mental health and substance use systems, increasing access to needed services and support.

Ms. Smith explains that, while the CPSW Vocational Training Program has the potential to usher participants into a well-paying, lifelong, fulfilling career, it also fosters a healthier and more supportive environment within NMCD facilities:

"We're going to be doing it in two separate ways; part of it will be vocational, and another part of it, we are hoping to give to our long-term inmates - those who have been sentenced to many years, who have very impeccable records within the system, and have been in recovery - and give them a purpose again. You know, because the heart of CPSW work is in that person's ability to connect with any other individual from their own lived experience, right? So, we're taking some of those inmates who have been here a long time and been with us for many years and still have several years to go and preparing them for the time when they do get out and letting their lived experiences help people within the facility now."

The opportunity to view their own lived experiences - including mistakes, poor choices, failures, relapses, and struggles - as a collection of assets is a gift that many incarcerated people find to be an unexpected and welcome blessing. Ms. Smith explains:

"Some justice-involved people have been so beat up over their experiences for a very long time, right? Whether it's their family that has lost faith in them, their husbands, their wives, their children, former bosses, former supervisors, just so many people that maybe have told them, you know, 'You're never going to amount to anything because you are this or you are that, or your mental illness is holding you back.' It's not; this is a way where that lived experience is going to someday have an effect on another person's life and maybe save somebody's life."

Stacey Burleson is a formerly incarcerated person who, after her release from the NMCD, completed the Certified Peer Support Worker Vocational Training Program and has gone on to apply that credential to building her life's work. Ms. Burleson expands on how discovering the peer support model has transformed her life:

"The New Mexico Corrections Department has been instrumental in my recovery and [the] success of my organization, 'Women in Leadership' (WIL).

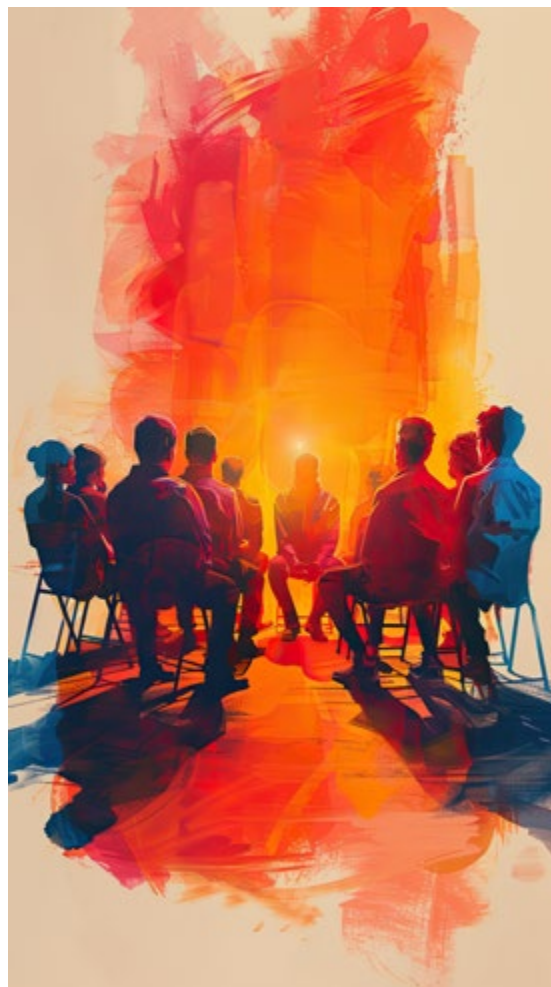
Through the organization, we help women who are impacted by the criminal justice system directly, or indirectly. We also organize job and resource fairs, which take place inside of the prisons. Without the work I do with the women and men inside the Corrections Department, I don't know where my life would be right now. I lost my son the first day I arrived in prison, and my mom died just eight months later. I didn't want to live anymore, but the other women and corrections staff rallied around me, and they helped me through some dark days. There were many nights when I would lay in bed and pray to God that if He gave me a chance to change my life, I would return to the prison system to help change lives for the better."

"Working with the prison system is a part of my everyday recovery. I could not do this without the Corrections Department staff. This work has transformed my life and has given me a purpose and joy that I had lost when my child died."

"I stand here today as a shining example of what can happen if you buy into the idea of rehabilitation. This gives me hope and belief that anyone can change their life, with the help of the community. I am so grateful for the opportunity to go back into an institution where I did time and pay it forward – to help others in the same place where I once was."

There is perhaps no better way to turn your own struggle into someone else's strength, so if you are currently incarcerated and would like to learn more about the Certified Peer Support Worker (CPSW) Vocational Training Program, reach out to Behavioral Health staff at your facility. If you are a probationer or parolee who would like to pursue this training, reach out to the Office of Peer Recovery and Engagement (OPRE) at opre.bhsd@hca.nm.gov.

PARALLELS



"Those who have walked through the fire of their own hell and survived it tend to leave sparks of light wherever they go." ~Omar Sharif

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Inside Voices S1E4

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of your
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WANNA BE STARTIN' SOMETHIN'

NM Small Business Entrepreneur Program, Especially When Combined with other NMCD Programming, Can Pave the Way to Self-Employment



Being a successful entrepreneur requires professionalism, experience, grit, and determination. Those who think they're up for the challenge can enroll in NMCD's Entrepreneur Program.

It's natural for incarcerated people to spend a lot of time dreaming about freedom. For many, the ultimate freedom is represented not only by returning to their community, but by starting their own business and being self-employed.

While not having a boss, not punching a timecard, and not having to maintain a strict schedule are all perks of owning one's own business, there are a lot of sacrifices involved as well. As they say, with great freedom comes great responsibility. As is the case for anything worth pursuing, preparation will help ensure success.

As anyone who has had a taste of self-employment will likely tell you, there is perhaps nothing more satisfying than cultivating and watching your small business grow as a result of your hard work and dedication.

For those who may be envisioning a post-incarceration future that includes self-employment, NMCD has partnered with the New Mexico Small Business Development Center (NMSBDC) to make an entrepreneurial training program available.

Currently offered as an eight-week program, the NMSBDC Entrepreneur Program consists of weekly classes with homework and reading assignments throughout. Participants develop their business ideas and plans throughout the course. Each cohort ends with a graduation in which each participant presents his or her business plan to the class.

The program has been designed to be interactive and dynamic, encouraging peer-to-peer support so that each participant can inhabit the role of both student and teacher, coaching and encouraging fellow classmates.

According to Glenn Geffcken, Training & Event Coordinator with NMSBDC, rather than attempting to make participants experts in entrepreneurial skills, the goal of the Entrepreneurship Program is to "...provide students with the basics to get them started quickly and then connect them with NMSBDC coaching and resources for their continuing education post-release."

The program also aims to "focus on teaching participants how to launch low-capital businesses for ease of entry."

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Inside Voices S2E5

The program has been designed to be “one part inspiration” and “two parts didactic training.”

Other objectives of the program, according to Mr. Geffcken, include “making the program as interactive and experiential as possible; continually focusing on coaching participants into an understanding of feasibility; continually empowering participants to know that they can do this; and continually preaching the mantra of the need for grit and determination.”

It’s important to remember that small business success depends not only on obtaining the right education and guidance, but also on thinking creatively and setting yourself apart from the competition. When considering what type of business you might start, you’ll need to ask yourself a variety of questions:

“What problem does my business model solve for customers?”

“Will my business provide physical goods or services?”

“Who is my ideal client? And how will I reach them?”

“What makes my business unique?” (Answers to this question may include your story, your business’ culture, branding, charitable affiliations, competitive pricing, and / or the unique services you offer.)

And then there are the practicalities that must be determined:

“Have I identified my revenue streams?” (In other words, “How will this business make money?”)

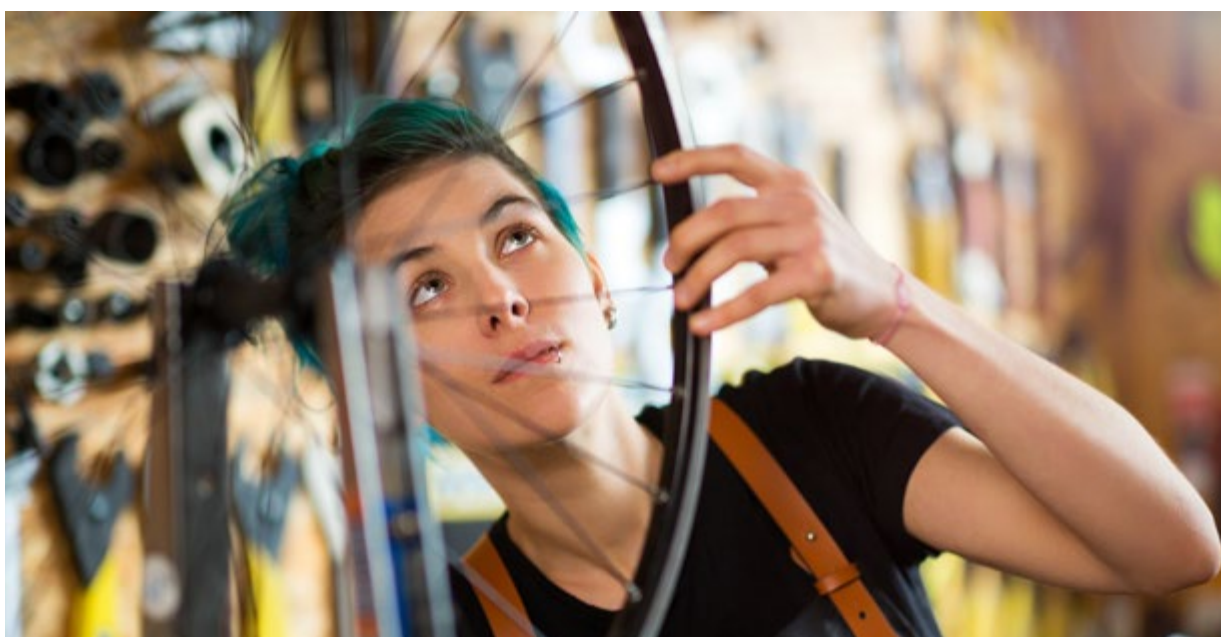
“How much start-up capital will I need to start this business? And where will that money come from?”

“Where will I operate my business?” (“Will I run my business from home, in a store front, from a warehouse space, or maybe online?”)

If you don’t know the answers to all of these questions right away, that’s ok. Just knowing what to ask is an important first step. The answers will likely fall into place as you progress through your plan. And if the answers don’t materialize, then that may be a sign that perhaps this idea isn’t as feasible as you first thought, which just means that it may be time to go “back to the drawing board.”

It’s also important to realize that formerly incarcerated people must consider the nature of the business that they’d like to start and confirm that their criminal record won’t prevent them from doing so. This doesn’t mean that returning citizens cannot achieve exceptional success as entrepreneurs, because they certainly can. It simply means that not all business models will be appropriate for all people.

For example, if your offense involved driving while under the influence (DUI) or something else that will prevent you from obtaining a driver’s license,



Success in entrepreneurship should be built on a person’s passion, no matter what that might be.

Behavioral Health Services

Life After Release Group

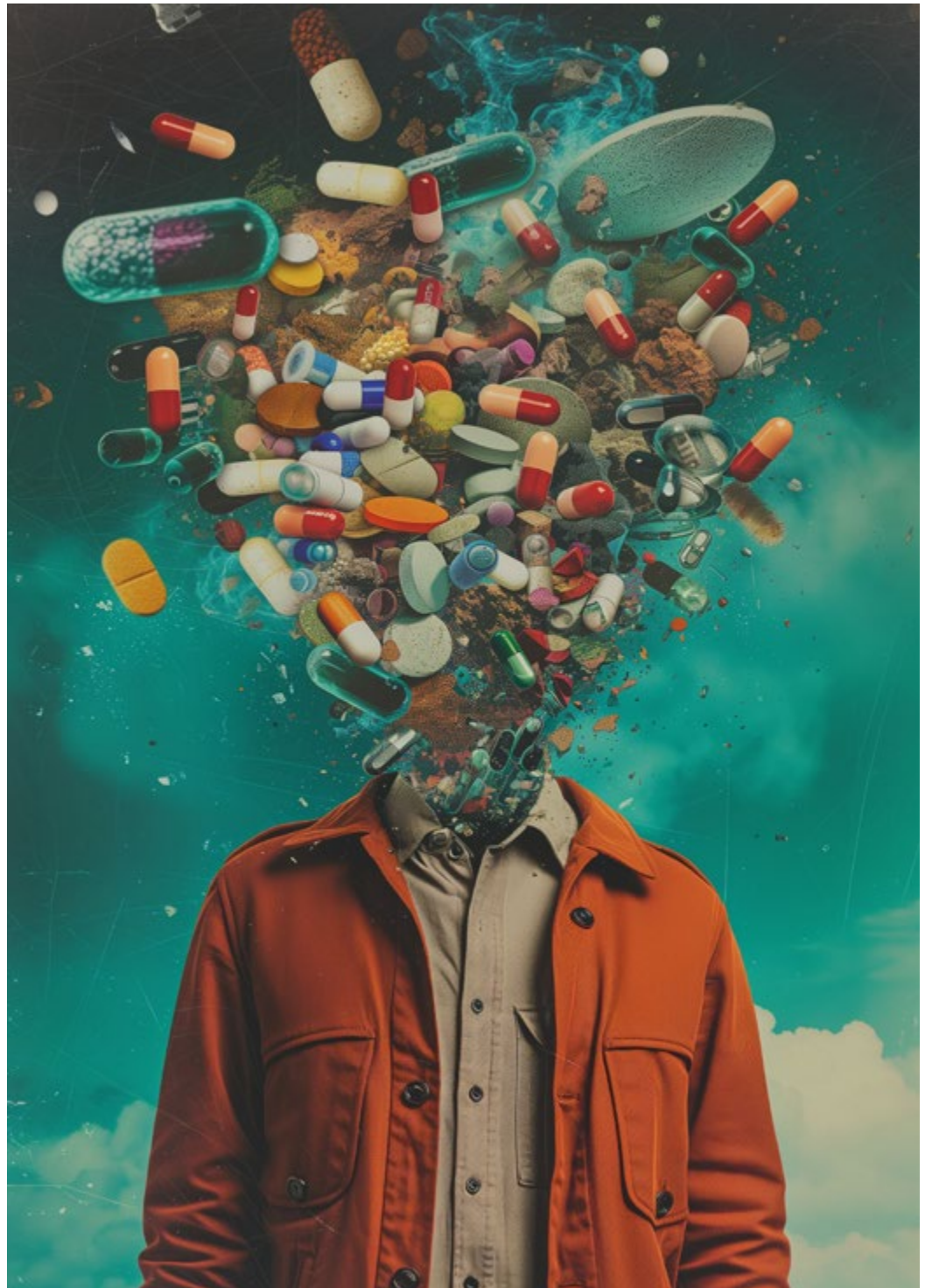
provides cognitive and behavioral skills training modules that assist in planning for life after release for incarcerated individuals approaching a release date.

The Depression Group

is an introductory psychoeducational group that provides participants with education about depression and its treatment.

IOP

Intensive Outpatient Addictions Treatment Programs offer a concentrated period of addictions treatment.



If you're struggling with mental health or substance use disorder issues, reach out to Behavioral Health staff in your facility.



Identifying a need in the marketplace and determining how you can meet that need is an essential step in building a successful business.

then it won't be possible to pursue a business that relies on driving. If the terms of your parole prohibit you from accessing the internet (due to a cyber and / or sexual offense), then an online business will be out of the question for you. There are also offenses that will preclude returning citizens from working with or near children; working around alcohol; and / or affiliating with other populations such as convicted felons. The key is to simply be aware of what your restrictions will be as you reintegrate, and plan accordingly.

But, as you will discover by reviewing the upcoming list; brainstorming on your own and with your peers; and consulting with program instructors, there are so many entrepreneurial paths available that you will easily be able to formulate an appropriate, realistic, and feasible small business idea for yourself.

While there are numerous businesses that one can start with entrepreneurial training and a small investment alone, NMCD students have a unique opportunity to pair the NMSBDC Entrepreneur Program with other NMCD Career Technical Programs in order to amplify their potential.

Consider some of the entrepreneurial paths outlined below:

Entrepreneur Program Alone + Minimal Investment =

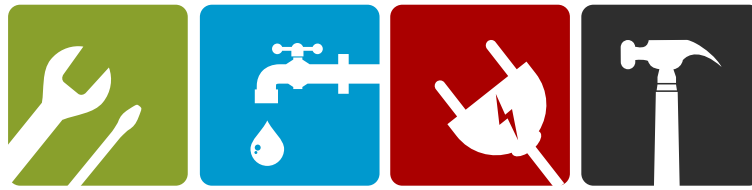
- **Pet Waste Yard Cleanup Service** (Offer subscriptions for weekly service or packages wherein you visit clients' homes to pick up their pets' waste from their yards.)
- **Garbage / Recycling Bin Service** (Offer subscriptions for weekly service to ensure that clients' garbage & recycling bins are put out and brought back in.)
- **Stenciling House Numbers on Curbs** (Provide visibility to first responders by stenciling house numbers on clients' curbs.)
- **Laundry Service** (Provide a subscription-based "fluff & fold" service, package and deliver clean laundry to clients' homes.)
- **"Incarceration Consultant"** (Work with filmmakers who want to ensure accuracy when representing incarceration.)
- **Social Media content creator** (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to...? What subject matter do you know so well that you could talk about it endlessly?)
- **Yard Maintenance Business** (Offer clients subscriptions or packages for mowing, raking, pruning, and / or watering services.)



"Find a job you enjoy doing, and you will never have to work a day in your life." ~Mark Twain

- **Resale Business** (Buy collectibles from thrift stores, flea markets, etc., and resell them online via E-Bay, Etsy, etc. for a profit. Or buy items that have been returned to Amazon by the pallet to resell online.)
- **Window Washing Business** (Offer subscription-based window washing services to residential and / or commercial clients.)
- **Window Painting Business** (Paint temporary holiday or seasonal designs on business' windows and remove them after the holiday or season is over.)
- **Seasonal Christmas Light / Luminaria / Farolito Installation Business** (Put up and take down Christmas lights and other holiday decorations for clients.)
- **Residential Cleaning / Housekeeping Business**
- **Power Washing Business** (Power wash clients' driveways, sidewalks, decks, and porches.)
- **Construction Site Cleanup Business** (Specialize in cleaning up construction sites or newly constructed homes prior to their being photographed and listed.)
- **Motivational Speaking Business** (Share your inspirational story with students, at corporate events, at conventions, and other forums.)
- **Carpet Cleaning Business** (Clean clients' wall-to-wall carpeting or pick up area rugs to be cleaned and returned.)
- **Mural Painting Business** (Work with building owners and municipalities to paint outdoor murals.)
- **Self-Employed Delivery Driver** (Create your own business or partner with companies like Uber Eats, Door Dash, etc. as an independent contractor.)
- **Self-Employed Ride Share Driver** (Create your own business or partner with companies like Uber, Lyft, etc. as an independent contractor.)
- **Custom Piñata Business** (Craft and sell custom piñatas for parties, either filled with custom favors or sold unfilled.)
- **Party Rental Business** (Purchase and rent out karaoke machines, bouncy houses, folding tables & chairs, etc. for parties and events.)
- **Balloon Arch Business** (Craft custom balloon arches and balloon sculptures for parties, weddings, and other events.)

Looking for a Career?
If You're 6-8 Months to Release, Sign Up for the



New Mexico Corrections Department
**Residential & Commercial Maintenance
Tech Course**

**Furnace
Maintenance**

Fuse Box

Basic Plumbing

A/C Maintenance

Drywall

Wiring System



Submit an IRF to learn more.
6 Week Course

****Bonus**** Participants releasing to the following counties - Union, Harding, Quay, Guadalupe, De Baca, Curry, Roosevelt, Chaves, Lincoln, Otero, Eddy, and Lea - may be eligible to receive tools purchased by Eastern Board WIOA offices.

- Face Painting (Paint children's faces at festivals, farmer's markets, private parties, and community events.)

Entrepreneur Program + Auto Detailing Program =

- Mobile Car Detailing Service (Offer subscriptions for monthly services or packages.)

Entrepreneur Program + Dog Program =

- Dog Training Services (Work with individual clients in their homes and / or offer group classes.)
- Dog Walking Services (Create your own business and offer a subscription service to clients or partner with a company like Wag! as an independent contractor.)
- Pet Sitting Services (Check in on clients' pets while they're away on vacation.)
- Dog Transport Services (Transport clients' pets to the veterinarian's office or even cross-

country for moves or rehoming.)

- Social Media Content Creator (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to train their dogs and teach them tricks.)

Entrepreneur Program + Commercial and Residential Tech Program =

- Handyman Business (Offer basic building repairs and maintenance services to residential and / or commercial clients.)
- Basic Home Repairs Education (Offer classes to homeowners on the basics of home repairs and maintenance.)

- Social Media Content Creator (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to do basic home repairs and maintenance.)

Entrepreneur Program + CDL Program =

- Moving Business (Move clients across town or across country.)



Entrepreneurship not only allows people to design their own schedule and lifestyle, but also allows them to bring their own special talents to the world.

- **Car Transport Business** (Transport cars for individual clients, car dealerships, or car collectors.)
- **Self Employed Trucker for Hire** (Start your own trucking company or work as an independent contractor for other trucking companies.)

Entrepreneur Program + Culinary Program =

- **Personal Chef Business** (Deliver pre-made custom meals to clients or cook for them in their home.)
- **Food Truck Business**
- **Cooking Education** (Offer individual or group cooking classes.)
- **Cottage Industry Food Sales** (Create food products to sell at farmer's markets such as jams, jellies, snacks, baked goods, or freeze-dried snacks.)
- **Social Media Content Creator** (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to cook, sharing recipes.)

Entrepreneur Program + Culinary Program or Bakery Program + Dog Program =

- **Dog Treat Bakery** (Sell from a storefront, food truck, farmer's markets, online, or via subscription delivery.)
- **Personal Chef for Dogs** (These days, many people - including busy professionals - feed their pets special raw food diets or medically prescribed diets. Prepare and deliver customized meals to clients on a weekly basis.)

Entrepreneur Program + HVAC Program =

- **HVAC Service & Installation Business**
- **Social Media Content Creator** (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to keep up with simple maintenance of their AC system and how to ensure optimal efficiency from their AC system.)

Entrepreneur Program + Barbering Program =

- **Barbershop Owner** (Service your own clients, plus rent chairs to other barbers.)
- **Self-Employed Barber or Stylist** (Rent a chair in an established shop.)
- **Mobile Hair Cutting Business** (Visit nursing homes, retirement communities, the homes of homebound or disabled clients, or cater



Allowing customers to free up their own time and energy by providing tasks that they are too busy to do themselves is a great model for a successful business.

NMCD's **NALOXONE** “GRAB AND GO” PROGRAM

IS NOW AVAILABLE AT
ALL
NMCD PROBATION
& PAROLE OFFICES!



It's a life saver!



If you are a probationer or parolee and believe that it would be helpful for you to have access to the opioid overdose reversal medication Naloxone, you can now stop in at ANY NMCD Probation & Parole Office statewide and help yourself to a box, which includes two doses, along with literature that details instructions for its effective use.

to busy professional people.)

Entrepreneur Program + Weaving Program =

- Weaving Studio Owner (Sell hand-woven rugs and other textile arts.)
- Weaving Education Business (Conduct weaving classes for community members for a tuition fee. Organize classes in your own studio, or travel to retirement homes, community centers, etc.)
- Social Media Content Creator (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to weave, discussing the difference in materials, etc.)
- Weaving Pattern Design Company (Create and sell weaving patterns to class participants and studio clients, or online via sites like Etsy or E-Bay.)

Entrepreneur Program + Horticulture Program =

- Small Traditional or Hydroponic Farming Operation (Grow herbs to sell to restaurants, at farmer's markets, etc.)
- Plant Care Business (Provide a subscription-based service watering and caring for plants in office buildings, hotels, and other commercial spaces.)
- House Plant Cultivation (Grow house plants like banzai, cacti, succulents, or others and sell them at farmer's markets or create a subscription-based plant delivery service wherein clients receive a different house plant each month with literature that includes care instructions and the plant's history.)
- Social Media Content Creator (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to cultivate and care for plants.)

Entrepreneur Program + Bakery Program =

- Bakery Operation (Create and sell baked goods from a commercial store front or at farmer's markets or create a subscription-based service wherein clients receive a delivery of baked goods on a regular basis.)

- Special Occasion Cake Sales (Take orders for custom decorated cakes for weddings, birthdays, anniversaries, retirements, etc.)

- Baking Classes (Teach community members basic or advanced baking skills or host cake or cookie decorating workshops / parties.)

- Social Media content creator (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to bake and decorate baked goods.)

Entrepreneur Program + Heavy Equipment Operator (HEO) Program =

- Self-Employed HEO for Hire (Work with homeowners who need landscaping projects done, irrigation trenches dug, etc.)

Entrepreneur Program + Automotive Technology Program =

- Self-Employed Mechanic
- Automotive Shop Owner
- Social Media Content Creator (Create a YouTube channel teaching viewers how to diagnose and repair their own cars.)

Now that you've got your "thinking cap" on and your imagination has been jump-started, what entrepreneurial endeavor will YOU start working toward?

While the entrepreneurial program is currently only available in a few facilities, if you have an interest in participating, be sure to reach out to your Supervisor of Education (SOE) to be added to a list of potential participants.

The program will be limited to those within one year of release who have a strong determination to complete an eight-week long program, and who believe that they have a skill or area of experience that will lend itself to building a business.

And if you have an interest in any of the other Career Technical Programs mentioned herein, ask your SOE about those as well!



A REAL LIFT UP

NMCD's Forklift Certification Program Elevates Returning Citizens' Employment Opportunities and Standard of Living



The NMCD's Reentry Division is all about providing returning citizens with opportunities that can help them improve their lives, both while incarcerated and afterward.

As Reentry Deputy Director Haven Scogin, puts it, "What we're trying to do in our positions is to provide opportunities for you to follow your path wherever your heart and your will and your desire go." So, in other words, Reentry staff strive to help lift up those in NMCD's care.

Among NMCD's numerous reentry programs, perhaps the most literal case of providing that "lift up" is the Forklift Certification Program.

Learning the safety protocols and practical operation of a forklift as part of this program will not only earn participants a certificate of completion but will also position them to walk into nearly any warehouse facility with a significant edge on other applicants.

As Ms. Scogin explains,

"When you think of where you could work with a Forklift Certification – it's everywhere. Everywhere you can think of from big box stores, Walmart, Amazon. Any community has warehouses and

employers very much prefer, when they're looking to hire people, someone to walk in with a certificate saying, 'Hey, I've taken all the basic safety precautions, I've had time on the machine.' And it just makes you a better candidate for a potential job."

This four-hour training course provides the opportunity to train on an actual forklift, ensuring that graduates can eventually go into job interviews backed by real-world, hands-on experience.

In the course, participants will learn:

- Instructions, precautions, and limitations for different types of forklifts
- How to calculate forklift capacities
- How to load, transport, and unload materials safely
- How to perform forklift inspections before operating
- The different types of forklift fuel and how to safely work with them
- How to handle different driving surfaces

- **Pedestrian Safety**

This program teaches such a widely in-demand skill that, according to NMCD Career Technical Education Administrator Cory Hall, “We plan on expanding the program to all the facilities throughout the state.”

While pay can vary based on skill level, location, years of experience, and the specific employer, the national average hourly income for a Certified Forklift Operator in the United States is around \$20.53 as of March 25, 2025. That translates to an annual income of over \$43,000.

Regardless of your location, if your projected release date is within two and a half years or less - or if you will be in prison longer and are currently employed with Corrections Industries and need forklift certification to do your job while incarcerated - you may be eligible to enroll. Be sure to reach out to your Supervisor of Education (SOE) to apply for this program. And get ready to raise the bar on your post-incarceration job prospects!

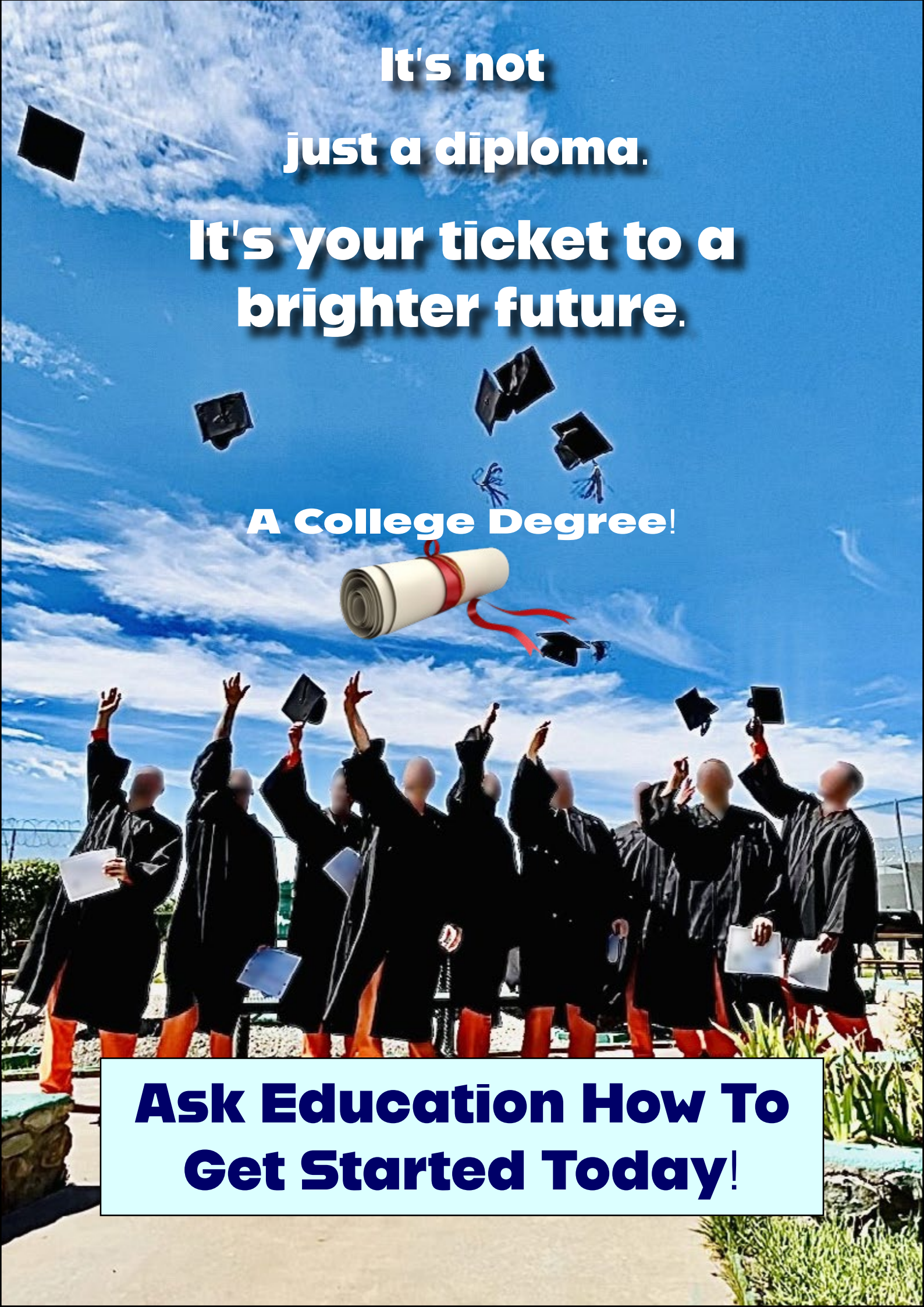


Earning one's forklift certification is one of the most practical endeavors that one can pursue while incarcerated.

PARALLELS



Work environments for forklift operators can vary greatly, from indoor warehouses to outdoor work sites, distribution warehouses like those used by Amazon, membership warehouse stores like Costco or Sam's Club, loading docks, and more.



**It's not
just a diploma.
It's your ticket to a
brighter future.**

A College Degree!

**Ask Education How To
Get Started Today!**

"A NEW CHAPTER" BOOK CLUB

New Statewide Book Club Creates Culture, Connection, and Conversation
Among NMCD Prison Community



Build your own library!

Earlier this year, we here in the Education Department had an idea: “What if we helped organize a statewide book club for those incarcerated within the NMCD?”

We chose a book from the over 74,000 titles that comprise the Gutenberg Library, the entirety of which is available to inmates via their state-issued tablets, and we put the word out, not knowing how much interest we might find.

Well, we discovered that there was a LOT of interest in this concept. Before we knew it, dozens of incarcerated people across the state were all reading the book we had chosen as our first title: “The War of the Worlds” by H.G. Wells.

We then arranged for select participants to meet and discuss the book, and we recorded the conversation to incorporate some of the comments into an upcoming episode of NMCD’s “Inside Voices” podcast.

Not only were we pleased to see so much interest in the book club, which we titled, “A New Chapter,” but we were also encouraged to witness the very thoughtful conversation that took place during that first meeting.

As we mentioned in the article titled, “The World at Your Fingertips,” in Volume 1, Edition 2 of Parallels, it’s estimated that over five million Americans regularly participate in some form of informal book club. So, it should come as no surprise that such gatherings are similarly appealing to incarcerated populations.

Sharing perspectives about the themes, ideas, and concepts that a book brings to readers’ minds makes for lively, interesting, and enlightening conversations. Especially for incarcerated readers, reading and discussing books can provide a temporary respite from the monotony of their day-to-day lives.

Join the Club!

Read, Discuss, Share.

IT'S FREE



Free book library on your tablet.
Located in the "Entertainment" section.
over 70,000 titles!

Check with Education to find out more.

**Check out the discussion on
the free podcast
on your tablet. Located in
the "Information" folder.**



Inside Voices S2E4



The first selection for NMCD's "A New Chapter" Book Club was the sci-fi classic "The War of the Worlds" by H. G. Wells.

While those unfamiliar with "The War of the Worlds" might dismiss it as simply a science fiction story about aliens, the conversations that were prompted by our first book club meeting included the identification of many complex themes including colonization; genocide; imperialism; biowarfare; and the struggle between nature and technology.

Carlos, who participated in the first book club meeting after reading "The War of the Worlds," had this to say about his experience: "I thought the ...meeting was great. It was extremely good conversation about the book, 'The War of the Worlds.' Really profound insight and opinions. The book club is great and it is also a fantastic idea to put into action for us. I will continue to be a part of this book club, and I look forward to reading the next book. Thank you!"

Garret, who was also included in that first meeting, had a similarly positive experience: "I did really enjoy being part of the book club and look forward to the next book."

Anton was also very enthusiastic about being a part of the club: "Thank you for the opportunity to communicate my experiences through the reading of 'The War of the Worlds.' The platform that your involvement provided for me to participate [in] dialogue ...has been memorable and well received

within my spirit! Thank you!! The opportunity to engage ...about real time ideas and inspirations has been ...refreshing for [my] mind. Thank you for engaging me through this opportunity. I'm hopeful that future such experiences will continue [so] that I may be able to happily participate... Thank you."

Anton went on to comment on one of the passages from the book that had a particularly profound impact on him: "My favorite part was Chapter Two, The Falling Star, where he goes, 'Good Heavens!... There's a man in it – men in it! Halfroasted to death! Trying to escape!' For me, that was finally contact with... something outside of myself, something outside the existence of the earth realm. Finally, something from out there was contacting with earth and there were men in it – and not only one man, but men. That... made a powerful, powerful imagery in my head."

If you are interested in participating in NMCD's "A New Chapter" Book Club, be sure to reach out to the Supervisor of Education (SOE) at your facility to learn more. Book club selections, as well as over 74,000 other book titles, are always free to access and read via your state-issued tablet.

As book club participant Keenan shared in response to that first gathering, "Knowledge is power, so read."

PARALLELS

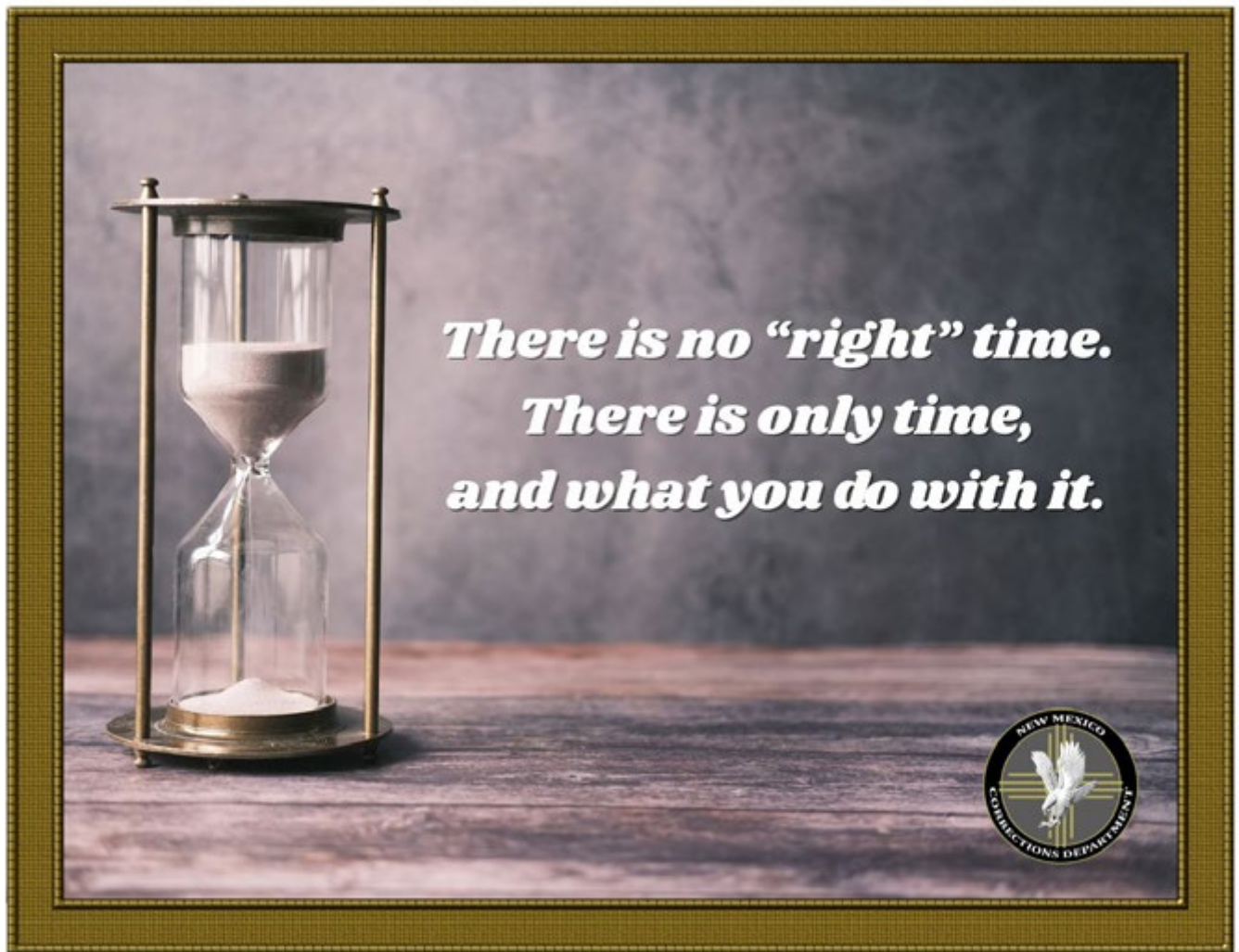
**To hear more,
check out the free podcast
on your tablet. Located in
the “Information” folder.**



Inside Voices S2E4



"The war of the worlds" was published in French, in 1900, but not issued with illustrations until 1906, when the Brazilian artist Henrique Alvim Corrêa took on the task. (Text from The Public Domain Review.)



**It's time you checked out
the free podcast on your
tablet. Located in the
"Information" folder.**

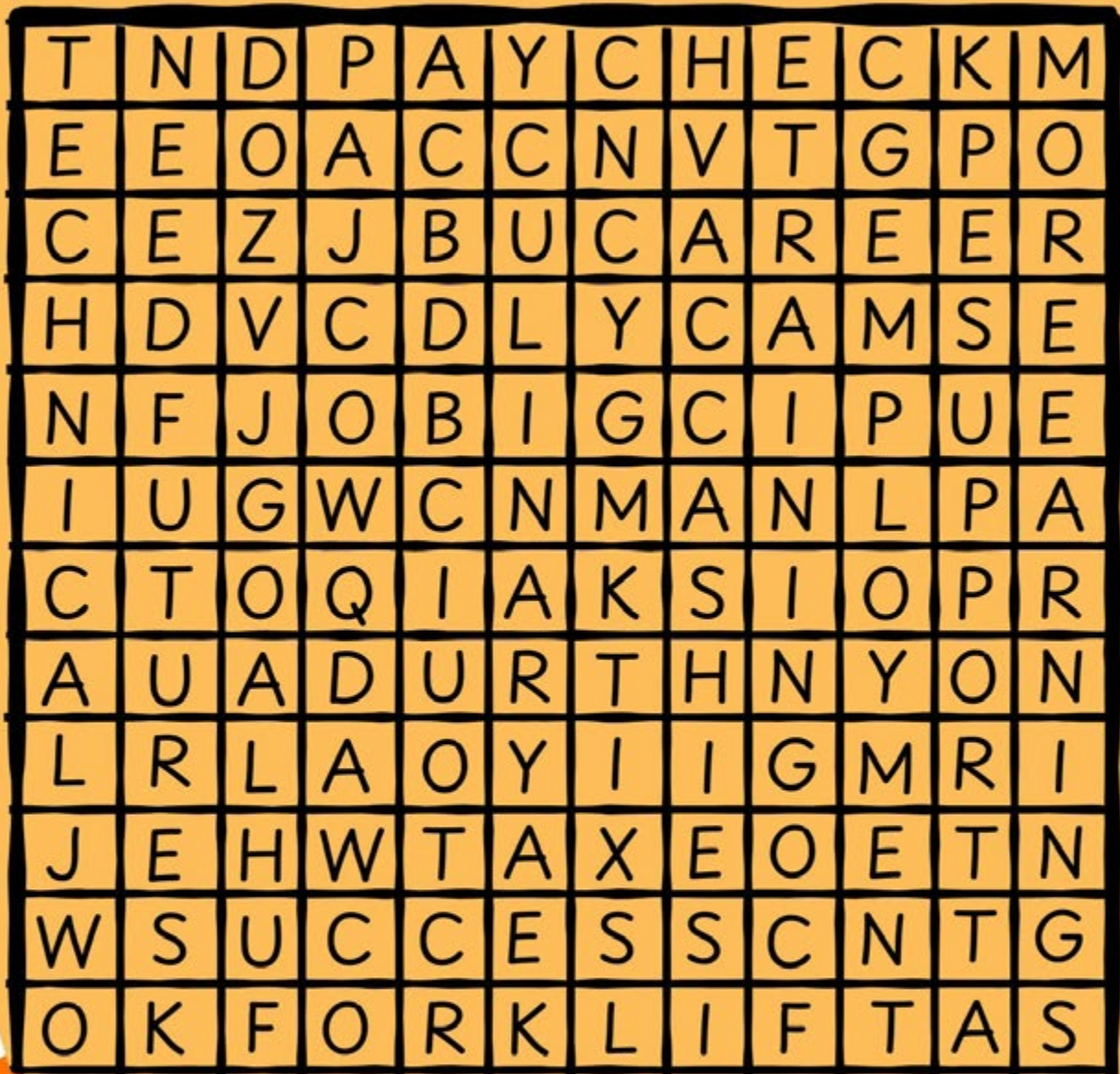


Inside Voices S1E6



PARALLELS WORD SEARCH

YOU WILL FIND THE ANSWERS TO THE WORD SEARCH
ON THE NEXT PAGE.



CDL
HEO
CAREER
VOCATION
CULINARY

FIND THESE WORDS:

JOB
MORE
CASH
HVAC
FORKLIFT
FUTURE
EARNINGS

OSHA
NEED
WORK
SUCCESS
TRAINING
TECHNICAL
SUPPORT

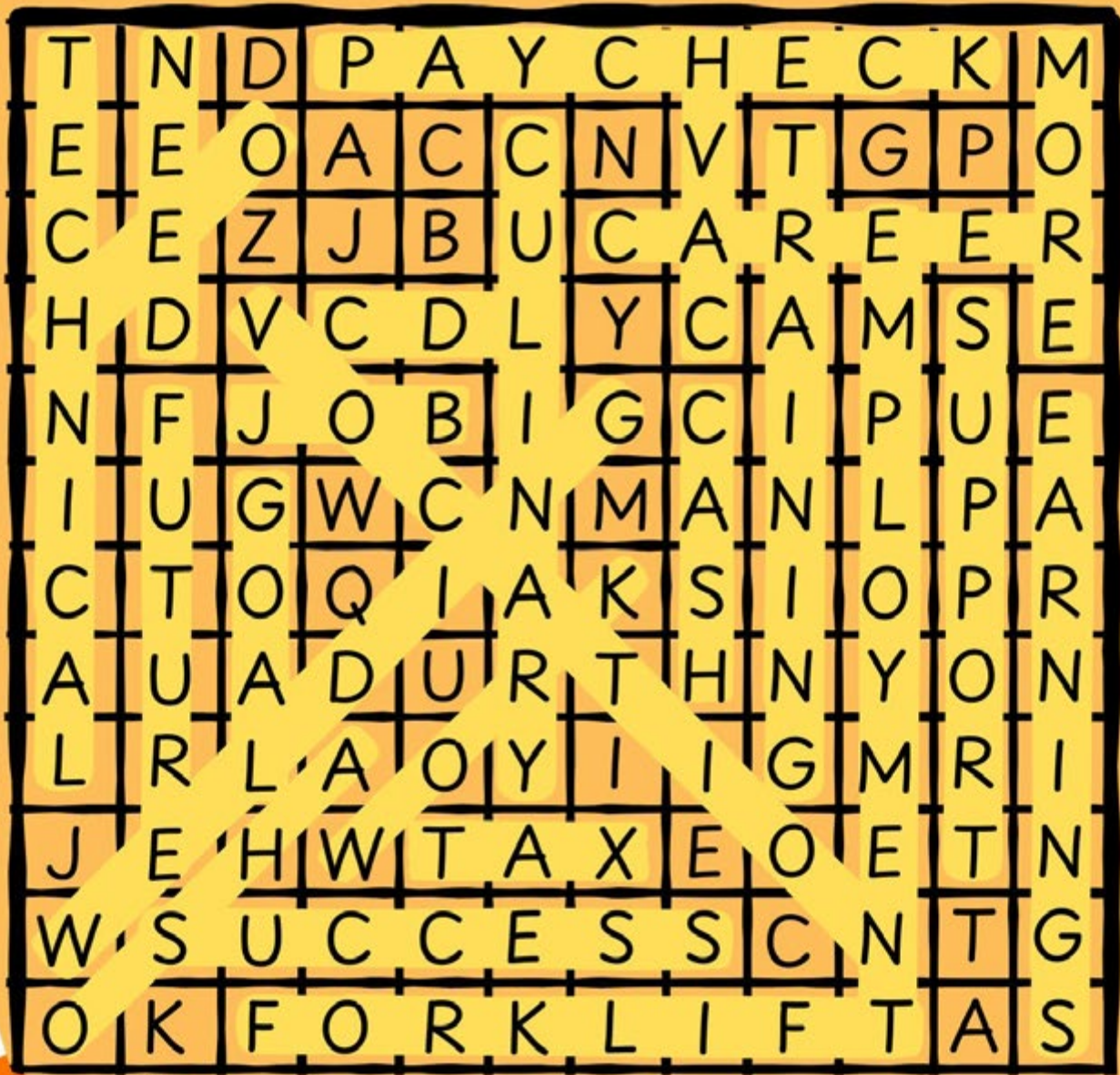


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GOAL
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EMPLOYMENT
WELDING



PARALLELS WORD SEARCH

ASK YOUR EDUCATION STAFF FOR A PRINTED WORD SEARCH,
THEN CHECK YOUR ANSWERS HERE.



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NEW MEXICO
CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

DIGITAL MAGAZINE

PARALLELS

VOLUME 1 / EDITION 3

JULY 2025

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Produced by Education staff within the Reentry Division.

Special thanks to the NMCD Wardens and staff members who granted interviews and facilitated access to incarcerated interviewees. The statements provided by justice-involved individuals within the NMCD have been published with their permission.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author, interviewees, and / or those quoted.

Note that the names of justice-involved people have been changed for privacy, safety, and / or security purposes, as well as out of respect to those directly impacted by their crimes.

Inmate photos have been sourced from Adobe Stock and/or generated using AI technology.

For any questions on Parallels, please contact the NMCD Reentry Division.

