

“News” from Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility-(NCYF)

(8/9/2005)

NCYF Working to Develop Community Service Projects

In July of 2005, Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility (NCYF) had an average monthly population of 82 youthful offenders. This is a significant increase from the January 2004 average of 68. With additional bed space added, and population increases, NCYF staff is working to keep their population engaged in activities that are positive and enhance the inmates skills and abilities.

At NCYF, programming is strongly emphasized and a personalized plan is developed for each of the inmates. Some of the programming available includes: education, pre-employment training, computer basics, parenting, substance abuse programming, counseling and anger management.

NCYF is working on developing community service projects as a means to “give back” something positive to the community-at-large. Some of the projects NCYF inmates have been involved with or completed are:

- On the 4th of July, inmates participated in an appreciation program for residents of the Thomas Fitzgerald Veteran’s Home. They designed thank you cards and wrote personal notes to all residents for serving in the Armed Forces. The cards were delivered by NCYF staff, which reported that the recipients were grateful for the recognition of their service to the USA.
- Another community service program, sponsored by the Religious Coordinator, consisted of a group of inmates designing and drawing bulletins to coincide with scripture passages being used in weekly sermons at area churches.
- Our Volunteer Coordinator recently organized a Talent Show. Participants performed by playing guitar, providing a demonstration on African Rhythmic drumming, break dancing and rap singing. All acts were pre-screened and rehearsed, much the same as with an organized stage presentation.

A vocational program offered at NCYF is Project Greenthumb, a basic horticulture course that provides both classroom and hands-on training in landscaping and gardening. The result has been improved physical appearance of the inner facility grounds and walkways. In addition, the fresh vegetables supplement inmate meals and reduce facility food costs.

NCYF continues to work with the Nebraska Humane Society, to train and prepare shelter dogs for adoption as family pets. This 12- week program has also evolved into a vocational program

as well, with several inmates gaining skills to assist with advanced animal training for dogs displaying aptitude to become Service dogs for the hearing impaired, for seizure patients, and as therapy dogs for nursing homes.

Several volunteers have submitted suggestions for future community service projects, and these requests will be screened for consideration. It is our belief that keeping the inmates engaged in service projects serves several purposes; 1) to keep them connected to the community as a means to ease the transition back into the community setting, 2) it provides additional opportunity to keep inmates occupied in positive activities, and 3) it develops and promotes the inmate's social and employment skills.