



THE STATE OF WYOMING DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
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Wyoming Department of Corrections News in Brief

COVID Update. To date, there have been no positive cases of COVID-19 reported within the inmate population under the Wyoming Department of Corrections (WDOC). The WDOC continues to follow recommended guidelines regarding the pandemic. Anyone inside a WDOC facility is required to wear a sneeze guard utility mask for the health and protection of others. Inmate visitations are still suspended as of this time. However, each inmate is provided two free phone calls per week and limited video visitation is also being offered to facilitate continued family contact. New inmates and individuals transferred from outside facilities are quarantined for 14 days before entering the general inmate population. There has only been one WDOC employee to test positive for the virus back in April, and that individual has since made a full recovery. WDOC staff remain diligent in their effort to ensure proper sanitization, social distancing and PPE recommendations are being adhered to in all WDOC facilities.

WMCI Inmates Learn Plumbing. Offenders at the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution (WMCI) in Torrington now have the opportunity to learn the plumbing trade.

Rick Schwartzkopf, a Master Plumber, teaches the program and it begins with an 80 hour National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) core course consisting of 8 modules: Basic Safety, Introduction to Construction Math, Introduction to Hand Tools, Introduction to Power Tools, Introduction to Construction Drawings, Basic Communication Skills, Basic Employability Skills, Introduction to Material Handling, and relevant lab work.

Following this course is a twelve module Plumbing course that is approximately 140 hours of instruction. These modules are: Introduction to the Plumbing Profession, Plumbing Safety, Tools of the Plumbing Trade, Introduction to Plumbing Math, Introduction to Plumbing Drawing, Plastic Pipe and Fittings, Copper Pipe and Fittings, Cast-Iron Pipe and Fittings, Carbon Steel Pipe and Fittings, Introduction to Plumbing Fixtures, Introduction to Drain, Waste, and Vent (DWV) Systems, and Introduction to Water Distribution Systems, and relevant lab work.

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Antoine Lewis, a participant in WMCI's inmate plumbing program.

The plumbing program is designed to teach inmates about general employment skills needed for specific job. The overall goal of vocational training is to reduce inmates' risk of recidivating by teaching them marketable skills they can use to find and retain employment following release from prison. In addition, some vocational training programs can assist in the operation of prisons by having inmates assist in institutional maintenance tasks. *(Article and photo contributed by Konne Rife, Field Public Information Officer for the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution).*

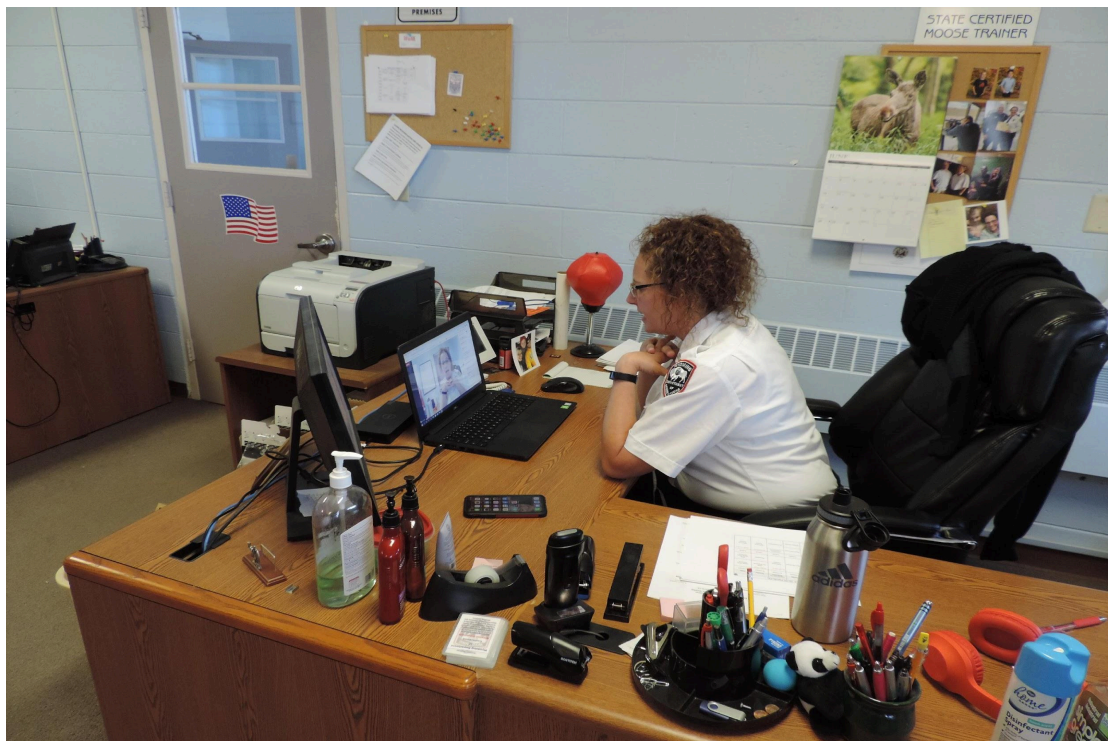
WDOC Conducts Online Training Academy. The WDOC's Training Academy in Rawlins has been conducting online training for new Correctional Officers and other Department staff. Academy instructors began providing a "Virtual Instructor Led Training" program for 61 new staff in early May as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Although teaching from computer screens for 9 hours a day has been challenging, overall the program has gone quite well according to Pete Norris, WDOC's Training Academy Manager. "It's obviously not our preferred way of teaching, but we've gotten through it better than I expected," said Norris, adding, "our student test scores have been right up there with what we see in a regular Academy"

Approximately half of the students are now done with their training and will move into their non-uniform positions within the state's prisons and Central Office. The remaining students, who are training to become Correctional Officers, will move on to "hands on" instruction for the next three weeks. Instructors and students will be following health and sanitation guidelines approved by the Wyoming Department of Health for this portion of the Academy. Once they complete their training, the majority of new Correctional Officers will work at the Wyoming State Penitentiary and the Wyoming Medium Correctional Institution, although a handful of Officers will be employed at the Wyoming Honor Conservation Camp, Wyoming Honor Farm and Wyoming Women's Center.

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Virtual training has allowed students to participate in remote learning from WDOC facilities across the State. The students pictured above are gathered at the WDOC's Training Academy in Rawlins.



Lieutenant Andrea Overman teaches an online class to a class of students at the WDOC Training Academy. Training Academy staff had just three weeks to modify their lesson plans before virtual instruction began in early May.

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K9 “Hunter” Retires. After five years of service in narcotics detection, “Hunter”, one of two drug dogs utilized by the WDOC, has officially retired from duty. K9 Hunter joined the Department in October of 2014. He was obtained through an organization called *Midwest K-9* which specializes in providing basic narcotics detection services to rescue dogs identified as candidates for the program.

Hunter was partnered with his handler, Sgt. Jory Shoopman in June of 2015. The team has served the Agency well over the years. The pair took “Top Dog” in 2016 and again in 2019, at an 11 state regional certifying course for the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA).

WDOC has two K9 teams assigned to the Department’s Investigative Services Unit (ISU). The WDOC employs K9 teams to assist the Department’s Prison and Field Services Divisions with narcotics detection.

In addition to detecting drugs inside Wyoming’s prisons, the WDOC K9 Unit provides support to local law-enforcement, probation and parole agents and other community organizations when requested. The WDOC’s Drug Dogs are trained to detect 6 types of narcotics: Marijuana, Cocaine, Methamphetamine, Ecstasy, Heroin and Mushrooms. WDOC K9s are trained for the single purpose of passive detection, meaning they are not trained to track or attack.

Hunter continues to live with Sgt. Shoopman and is said to be enjoying his retirement by spending lots of time sunbathing outdoors. Shoopman is now in the process of training a new rescue dog named “Zeke” for the Department.



Sgt. Shoopman and K9 Hunter. (Credit: Eichenberger Photography)

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