



**UPAN Newsletter** Volume 11 Number 8 | **AUGUST 2024**  
*“Empowerment and Growth Through Knowledge and Unity”*

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**Phone Problems Continue – Courtroom Comes to USCF – Antelope Update – Update on SOMB – Green Thumb Nursery Activities – Details on Commissary – *Dell-Emerald Topics* Dell Garden Space – IPP Info on Uintah County Jail**

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**Next Meeting: Monday, August 12, 2024 6:30 pm – 8:30 pm.** Speaker: Dr. Candice Waltrip, Sex Offense Treatment Program Director. Meetings are **FREE** and open to the public. **Join all meetings at** <https://bit.ly/UPAN-Meet>

**Following Monthly Meetings: Monday, September 9, 2024 6:30 – 8:30 pm. Family Meeting**  
**Monday, October 14, 2024 6:30 – 8:30 pm.** Speaker: Jennifer Yim, Administrative Director of BOPP  
 Please submit questions to [utahprisoneradvocate@gmail.com](mailto:utahprisoneradvocate@gmail.com) by **September 10, 2024**  
**Monday, November 11, 2024** Speaker: Brian Redd, Executive Director, Utah Dept. of Corrections  
 Please submit questions to [utahprisoneradvocate@gmail.com](mailto:utahprisoneradvocate@gmail.com) by **October 10, 2024**

*Meetings Available on UPAN Facebook Live and on UPAN’s Facebook page afterwards. Visit UPAN Facebook page for newsletters. Visit website (page 10) to subscribe to the UPAN Newsletter, or Utah Prisoner Advocate Facebook Page for link to current monthly meeting. Free to the public. Zoom link: <https://bit.ly/UPAN-Meet>*

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**Disclaimer: Formulate your own opinions about the information presented. This information is presented for the reader’s enlightenment and evaluation.**

**“There is but one solution to the intricate Riddle of Life; to improve ourselves [and in doing so,] we contribute to the happiness of others.” Mary Shelley, author**

**Phone Problems Continue for Inmates and Families**

By Molly Prince, LCSW

**Problems and confusion began in May.** Beginning in May, many prison families started to realize that their loved ones were calling them, yet the calls were not ringing through on the family phones, nor were their phone logs showing missed calls. At the same time, Global Tel Link Connect Network (GTL) started using a variety of phone numbers for both prisons.

We later learned it was also around that time it appears that GTL changed its name to ViaPath. This just makes

things more confusing because we still call the Global Tel Link Connect Network customer service phone number which answers as Global Tel Link, and our calls end with the recording saying, “Thank you for using Global Tel Link.”

**Phone number changes and confusion.** Phone numbers that had originally been used to identify a call from CUCF started to ring through to families with loved ones calling from USCF, and vice versa.

Then they implemented a completely new number in June for USCF which is 801-783-2472. For a short time, CUCF was assigned a phone number that had been used at USP Draper that started to show up on everyone's phones. Currently the phone number that originates from CUCF should show as 435-528-5184.

The problem of incarcerated people calling and only hearing the phone ringing repeatedly on their side while it did not ring at all on the recipient's phone became more widespread during June and continued into July.

**Dozens, if not hundreds, now affected.** Dozens of families on the UPAN Family Facebook Group initially reported the problems and contacted GTL's customer service and tech support. We were told nothing was wrong. Dozens of families contacted UDC in June. The complaints were routed to ViaPath representatives who said they were escalating the problem to their tech support in the back office (not the same tech support that customers can talk to).

Despite the fact that we pay dearly for these calls, and our concerns should be taken seriously and researched exhaustively until the problem is resolved, we were told by ViaPath that it is the responsibility of families to download call filter apps from our phone service providers (Verizon, T-Mobile, AT&T, etc.) and then set up the prison phone numbers on the apps to be accepted. We were told that the problem was that phone service providers had started automatically blocking any calls that they considered spam based on a 2019 law that allows these carriers to block spam calls. More confusion because it did not start to be a problem until June 2024.

**Conflicting information between ViaPath and our phone carriers.** The representatives of the various phone service carriers have told families that the cell phone companies do not automatically and arbitrarily block all numbers that could be spam. Rather the carrier can mark it as spam for the customer to decide if they want to answer, and the customer would need to block those calls themselves. Families can use their phone's spam blocking app or download the carrier's app to filter calls or block calls. Despite this conflicting information, many families did what the ViaPath representatives told us to do. We downloaded our carrier's call filter / spam blocker app and entered the prison phone numbers in the "Accept" category of phone numbers we want to make sure always ring through.

If the call filters and spam blockers were the problem, when we did what they advised, it should have resolved the problem and the new numbers should have been ringing through consistently. But they did not. The problem continues as I write this on July 19, 2024. Families have continued to report concerns. In fact there is another wave of families who did not have problems in the past who are reporting problems now (in July).

We have put the word out for families to ask their incarcerated loved ones to write to Inmate Phones in their facilities and report the problems with all their details.

I repeatedly wrote emails to those tech support people with GTL/ViaPath who had responded to the concerns. I spoke to tech support coaches of my own cell phone carrier who suggested that the prisons may not have adequate trunk lines to handle the high volume of calls from the prisons during peak use times, such as in the evenings or on holidays or weekends. I asked the ViaPath representatives and UDC administrators if they would make sure that UDC has enough phone lines in both prisons to accommodate the number of calls at peak times. They did not respond to me about that.

However, on July 15 we were informed GTL/ViaPath told UDC administrators that there are enough lines in both prisons to handle the volume of calls at peak calling times for inmates.

As of mid-July, some of have started receiving calls that ring through and our loved ones tell us they did not have to call multiple times, back-to-back to get it to ring through. Yet, at other times, we learn that our loved ones are having to repeatedly call several times before it rings through on our end.

Now we are learning that other families who had not experienced this problem in May or June, when so many of us started having them, are now experiencing them for the first time.

**The problem is complex.** It is clear that this problem is not simply about not having the new phone numbers for the prison set up in our phones as favorites, or making sure they are not blocked, and that they are in our "accepted" log in any call filters or spam blocker apps. It is clear that the Inmate Communication Provider, GTL/ViaPath still has a lot of work to do to make sure every piece of equipment and every piece of technology and programming is working perfectly to accommodate calls all day, every day, and that those connections are successful.

As of the third week in July, we are told that technicians are working on the phones and testing them by calling out from the housing units to see what happens.

**Other problems experienced with the phones.** Getting the call to connect and ring through has been the most frequent and widespread problem since May. However, as usual with calls from our loved ones, many people are also experiencing poor call quality (which is nothing new with GTL and other calling services) but it seems to have increased with this recent change to a new phone number, at least for those in USCF.

Calls might begin with one side not being able to hear the other side. Or they might start out fine, and then callers cannot hear each other, or it sounds like they are

fading in and out, or like they are talking under water. Then there are the random premature disconnects for no reason.

**How to report problems.** Family members are encouraged to reach out to the Customer Service / Tech Support at GTL at 877-650-4249. Since the menu they offer upon answering does not include customer service, you have to press 0. Then it asks if you are calling to inquire about a community correctional center service or other. Press 2 for other to wait for a live agent. While many of us were told there was nothing wrong with our phone account, we have some reports of family members learning there was a problem with their number and it needed to be reset. So the effort and time it takes to reach a representative might be worth it.

**Everyone who is experiencing problems is encouraged to keep track of dates and times and the problem and report them to Inmate Phones.** Prisoners affected by this should send a letter about this with all the information to Inmate Phones through interdepartmental mail. Include your name, offender #, housing unit, and the phone number that does not connect and simply rings and rings and rings. Include other problems you are experiencing with the phones

### **The Courtroom Has Come To Utah State Correctional Facility**

Based on the article posted at <https://corrections.utah.gov/2023/12/18/7404/> by Liam Truchard

In December 2023, a pilot program which brings the district court to USCF began. It is held in the Board of Pardons & Parole hearing room and looks like a court room with the state seal and state and American flags. A judge from the district court presides. It is referred to in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District Court offices as Judge Bates' courtroom when scheduling, but various judges preside over the proceedings each week.

The implementation of holding certain types of court hearings at the prison was a year in the making as a result of the need to reduce transport of incarcerated defendants to the courthouse. This saves the Department of Corrections resources in terms of staff and transport costs, not to mention time, each week.

It also saves incarcerated individuals a lot of time waiting for transport, the discomfort of being transported in handcuffs, shackles, and chains, and all that time waiting at the courthouse to be called for what is sometimes a brief check in and reschedule for another date.

The first time this court was held at USCF was on December 15, 2023 with Judge Bates presiding. He is

***“One doesn't have to operate with great malice to do great harm. The absence of empathy & understanding are sufficient.” Charles M. Blow, American journalist***

***“When you do something noble and beautiful and nobody notices, do not be sad.***

***For the sun every morning is a beautiful spectacle and yet most of the audience still sleeps.” John Lennon***

related to clarity and quality of the call, and arbitrary cut offs.

Family members are also encouraged to keep track of the problems they are aware of and email Jade Watkin [jwatkin@utah.gov](mailto:jwatkin@utah.gov) all the details including their loved one's name and offender # and your phone number that is not ringing or showing missed calls on your side. Include what steps you have taken to address the problem (like calling tech support or making sure the prison number is not blocked). Also include other problems with the quality of calls when listing your concerns.

As of July 18, we were provided with the names and emails for who to contact in Inmate Phones in each prison: CUCF – Mandi [mandibartholomew@utah.gov](mailto:mandibartholomew@utah.gov)  
USCF - Cristan [cristanstory@utah.gov](mailto:cristanstory@utah.gov)

**Do not give up.** This is exhausting to try to fix. If we do not keep them aware of the ongoing problems with the phone calls that we pay our hard earned money for, they will think things are resolved. They will not continue to work on troubleshooting to fix the glitches that continue to plague various incarcerated people and their families.

quoted as saying, “This is something new and we're trying to figure out what cases we can take.”

“The goal is to streamline the process and reduce transports,” he said, noting that the day's events eliminated the need to shuttle 15 offenders to a courthouse. “It's getting more inmates in front of the court. And it's 100 percent safer.”

All defendants seen in this court are already incarcerated. Many of the charges that are addressed in the court held at the prison are those acquired while in custody or if someone comes to prison on a parole violation with pending charges, or someone is sentenced to prison with other open cases that were not resolved before incarceration.

This court also seems to offer very desirable plea bargains that must be considered and taken at the time, or it is off the table. Those who plead guilty can receive their sentence immediately, reducing yet another court appearance.

This is not an option for everyone, but it certainly seems to be streamlining a significant number of cases that can be resolved quickly and efficiently, with less stress on both inmates and staff.

## **Update on Antelope and Opportunities for Classes**

This update was received by UPAN from Esekia Afatasi, Stakeholder Experience Coordinator for UDC

Antelope was on a limited rec schedule beginning the end of March 2024 due to several incidents involving inmate violence that resulted in potentially life threatening injuries to multiple inmates who received medical care in the hospital.

In an effort to ensure inmate and staff safety, recreation schedules were temporarily adjusted in order to prevent contact between incarcerated persons with a high potential to result in violence. The amount of time allowed for rec was within the UDC policy. If rec times were interrupted, Antelope staff worked to make up the time as soon as possible.

The Antelope leadership team fully recognizes the importance of rec time and the impact on inmate mental health when that time is limited.

As of June 1st, the Antelope team has implemented a new rec schedule which allows significantly more time out of cell for eligible prisoners based on their privilege levels. Antelope leadership reports spending a significant amount of time and effort working with the inmates to develop the new schedule. It is reported that Antelope leadership will continue to solicit input from residents of Antelope for any adjustments needed moving forward.

In the past several weeks, Antelope has been working with several partners to bring multiple education & programming opportunities to the inmates. The following classes either have been or shortly will be implemented for eligible inmates.

- Captain Your Story Program
- The Change Company Atlas Program (in addition to multiple existing Change Company platforms/ courses on tablets)
- Mental Health Lifer Group
- Healing From Trauma
- Family Impact & Overcoming Challenges
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy
- Emotional Regulation & Anger Management
- Managing Mental Health (Coping skills development)
- Exercise and Mental Health
- LDS Bible Study/Religious Services

Multiple additional education opportunities and classes on both tablets and in-person settings

These classes and groups are in addition to opportunities already in place and are a mixture of in-person and tablet access classes.

It should be remembered that there are always classes and appointments that may be delayed or cancelled due to IMS incidents or other issues related to site security. With that in mind, Antelope staff are committed to facilitating as many opportunities for inmates as possible.

The Deputy Warden in Antelope indicates that they are working to assure that incarcerated people are allowed to leave their cells to attend in-person classes. He further shared that they have prioritized developing opportunities and engagement for those housed in Antelope and will continued to focus on that moving forward.

## **Sex Offense Management Board is now the Sex Offense Management Advisory Committee**

By Kennedie Starr

In March, UPAN volunteers and families had the pleasure of visiting with Dr. Michele Leslie, the Director of the Sex Offense Management Advisory Committee (SOMAC)—formally known as the Sex Offense Management Board (SOMB)—during UPAN’s monthly meeting. With nearly a decade of experience working with populations with a sex-related offense, Dr. Leslie’s expertise and dedication to advancing evidence-based policies is truly an asset to the Sex Offense Management Advisory Committee.

Dr. Leslie provided an overview of the Committee’s work, their priorities, and some of the recent legislative updates that ultimately transformed the board into a committee, which is now formally housed under the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ).

**History and Changes.** The Sex Offense Management Board (SOMB) was originally created during the 2023 Legislative Session through H.B.268, Sex Offense Amendments, which was sponsored by Rep. Stoddard and Sen. Pitcher. The bill established the board and

outlined a variety of membership appointments, including membership from law enforcement; an individual who specializes in the treatment of adults convicted of sex offenses; and a representative associated with criminal justice victim advocacy.

To the surprise of many, the Sex Offense Management Board (SOMB) was repealed in state statute through the passage of H.B.532, State Boards and Commissions Modifications, during the 2024 General Session. It’s important to note that this bill sought to eliminate a variety of boards and commissions and not strictly target the SOMB.

Through negotiations, it was decided that while the Board would be eliminated in state statute, its function and organization were important and would remain present, operating under the Utah Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ). The Board was renamed the “Sex Offense Management Advisory Committee” (SOMAC) and continues to advance meaningful work, research, and recommendations

regarding treatment, risk assessment, and supervision practices for individuals on the registry or individuals ordered to complete sex offense treatment.

**The primary role of the Sex Offense Management Advisory Committee (SOMAC)** is to review evidence-based practices and treatment standards and provide policy recommendations to best support the population, reduce recidivism, and promote public safety. While the Committee does not make any final policy decisions concerning the registry and treatment practices, they do advance important research and discussions that guide better practices in the state of Utah. Dr. Leslie mentioned the committee is often doing “behind-the-scenes work” to advise and support management policies and practices.

**SOMAC consists of two subcommittees to further target their research and recommendations:**

**The Treatment Standard Subcommittee** reviews current treatment practices within the prison setting, the community setting, and the juvenile setting. They review current practices and analyze best practices to identify how each setting can improve. Dosage/treatment hours have been a frequent topic reviewed by this subcommittee. A potential policy goal is to connect treatment practices to the level of risk. The work of this subcommittee is not anticipated to be impacted by the statute change.

**The Sex Offense Registry Subcommittee** had the initial goal of moving the registry toward a risk-based registry instead of a conviction-based registry through small policy steps. However, post-legislative session, it has become clear that the priority of policymakers is to

review more sweeping changes that could be made to the registry to make large improvements. The work of this subcommittee is not anticipated to be impacted by the statute change.

Dr. Leslie also touched on **two major changes to the registry that were implemented** on July 1, 2024. S.B. 23 from the 2024 General Session merges the Sex and Kidnap Offender Registry and the Child Abuse Offender Registry into a single registry called the “Sex, Kidnap, and Child Abuse Offender Registry.”

S.B. 11, another bill from the 2024 General Session, enables the Dep. of Corrections to make certain information searchable on the Sex and Kidnap Offender Notification and Registration website, including telephone numbers for an offender. However, the search shall not return the name or any other identifying information about an offender.

To stay up-to-date on potential legislation and interim study items by the Legislature on this topic, please visit [le.utah.gov](http://le.utah.gov). You can subscribe to the Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice Interim Committee which meets next on August 21, 2024.

**Future SOMAC Meetings:** SOMAC meetings are open to the public and are hosted online and in person. You can subscribe to future meeting notices and view their agendas by visiting: <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/sitemap/publicbody/8315.html>

SOMAC’s next meeting will be held on September 4, 2024, at 1 p.m. in the CCJJ Large Conference Room (East Senate Building, 3rd Floor at the Capitol).

### **The Green Thumb Nursery Program is Up and Running with Many Benefits; USCF Inmates Built it From the Ground Up**

*This article is adapted from information in a 6/4/2024 article by Heather Peterson on KSL News Radio*

The old Utah State Prison was home to the Green Thumb Program in which hundreds of male inmates worked over the years. It produced a variety of bedding plants that were sold to the public each spring, and grew fields of pumpkins provided to special needs children in the fall.

The move to the new USCF was accomplished two years ago this July. UDC did not incorporate new greenhouses into the construction of the new prison. After the move, incarcerated individuals have been busy building greenhouses at USCF for the New Green Thumb Nursery Program under the direction of case manager Todd Barszcz, who has been the force behind getting the Green Thumb Program back on track, along with introducing a Horticulture Certificate Program.

The plants grown by program participants in these greenhouses at USCF provide plants for agencies across the state. Incarcerated workers develop life skills they can take with them after prison. The Green Thumb

Nursery Program was built from the ground up at USCF. According to the KSL article, Barszcz said, “We figured it out on our own. We did research on the Internet. We bought books for building codes and things like that.”

He and the rest of the men in his program designed and constructed the greenhouses themselves. They built each of the growing tables that hold the plants. They literally built all of the infrastructure needed to support the plants’ development from the bare ground up. On top of that, everything they use is designed to be eco-friendly and conserve water.

There are nine greenhouses near the back of the prison campus that are now operational in this program. Todd Barszcz began working to get the greenhouses built and the program up and running shortly after the move.

**Green Thumb is Getting Noticed, Plants are Used Throughout the State.** Thousands of seeds, sprouts and growing plants are cultivated in these greenhouses



which are destined to be sent out to various programs and destinations throughout Utah.

The Nursery Program grows plants for a variety of purposes. One purpose is to restore native vegetation across the state. They partner with many Utah agencies and organizations. These include the Salt Lake City Public Lands Department to the Utah Department of Natural Resources. These partnerships grow what is needed, for a fraction of the cost.

Barszcz explained, "With us being a key player now within the state, they can get more for their money. So your tax dollars that are going to fund these budgets for these places are being re-invested back into your public lands that you enjoy; they're able to get a lot more for your money."

Word of mouth about the program is spreading and the horticulture community is pleased with its partnership with USCF's Green Thumb Nursery Program. He continues to be contacted with requests for new partnerships and contracts. They even had to put some building projects on hold so they could fulfill the vast amount of orders for plants.

During June, the grow outs they were doing involved approximately 150,000 plants that were ready to go out the first part of July. Barszcz explained that meant the daily goal was to transplant 4,640 plants per day."

**Providing Apprentices with Life Skills, Perspectives and a Nationally Recognized Certificate in Horticulture.** In addition to providing economical approach to procuring plants to agencies throughout Utah, the real value is the opportunity to obtain practical horticultural experience to the incarcerated residents of USCF who are selected to be part of the program. They attend formal classes as well as on the job training as they apprentice in the art of horticulture.

According to Barszcz, the Green Thumb Nursery Program apprenticeship is the largest apprenticeship offered by the Office of Apprenticeship. Those who complete the program will be nationally recognized as a horticulturists. He explained that the program is 6,500

<https://kslnnewsradio.com/2107671/how-prison-greenhouses-are-helping-utah/#:~:text=SALT%20LAKE%20CITY%E2%80%93%20The%20Utah%20Department%20of%20Corrections,skills%20they%20can%20take%20with%20them%20after%20prison.>

## **What We Have Learned about UCI Commissary**

By Molly Prince, LCSW

On June 26, 2024, UPAN Directors Heidi Kubbe and Molly Prince had the opportunity to meet with Utah Correctional Industries (UCI) Operations Manager Cody Strickland and UDC Stakeholder Experience Coordinator Esekia Afatasi to discuss the problems incarcerated individuals have been experiencing with commissary for a prolonged period of time.

hours, covering literally everything in the horticulture industry. He states, "Once they earn it, it is theirs for life and they can go anywhere in the United States and it's acknowledged."

**Finding Purpose, Giving Back.** The benefits for those involved extend past the life skills they acquire. The article describes Cody Nielsen, who is serving a life sentence at the prison and will never be able to use his newfound talents in the outside world. However, he still finds meaning in his work.

The article quotes Nielsen. "It's given me a whole different perspective on life," Nielsen said. "It's made me realize even though I am in prison for life, there's still a lot of good you can still do as a person and give back and help people." This is a powerful awareness for anyone, particularly those incarcerated for life.

One of the many ways they do good and give back is through providing pumpkins each year for students with special needs at Jordan Valley and Kauri Sue Hamilton schools. Mr. Nielsen leads the program and he describes that responsibility and experience as "incredibly rewarding."

**Therapy Through Nature.** The Green Thumb Nursery Program is not just about acquiring job skills. Many of the men experience working in the greenhouses provides mental healing and stress relief.

One of the greenhouses is dubbed "The Sanctuary." It provides nature-based therapy, with a waterfall, benches and greenery for those who live and work there. "That's kind of what we want to do is create an area that people have access to, that's a nature-based therapy philosophy, but also educational as well," Barszcz said.

Barszcz has plans to expand and provide an even larger area for a mental health escape in the future. One of their upcoming projects is planting a botanical garden right outside The Sanctuary. "It's the freedom, it's calming, it's very relaxing" Nielsen said. "You're not in prison when you're here."

**Some History.** Utah Correctional Industries was created by the Utah Legislature through the Utah Correctional Industries Act in 1985, (Utah Code 64-13a), to provide employment and job training in a variety of industries to incarcerated individuals while providing value and cost savings in purchasing the products produced to state agencies. The Commissary that services USCF and CUCF is also run by UCI. It

employs incarcerated women in Utah State Correctional Facility and is staffed by 5 UCI non-inmate employees. For more information on UCI and other programs that employ Utah prisoners see <https://uci.utah.gov/about-uci/>.

The UCI Commissary, based at USCF in Salt Lake City, is a centralized canteen operation that provides services to the Utah State Correctional Facility, Central Utah Correctional Facility and the Sevier County Jail. According to the website, Commissary processes approximately 3,600 orders per week, utilizing a roller conveyor production line with item picking stations. Commissary offers products for sale to incarcerated persons including packaged food items, writing materials, electronics, hygiene products, arts & craft supplies, and approved clothing items. <https://uci.utah.gov/business-operations/commissary-services/>

Over the past few years, UPAN's Director of Commissary Issues Heidi Kubbe developed a productive relationship with the previous director of UCI, Maria Shirey, and that has continued with Shane Welch, the current UCI Director. We are pleased that Esekia Afatasi has facilitated opening up a dialog with Operations Manager Cody Stickland.

UPAN has been receiving complaints about commissary being out of stock on a regular basis for a few years. First it was due to the pandemic and the shutdowns related to it. Over time it included the shortage in products that were also happening in the community due to transportation problems and other supply chain issues.

**Basics regarding how Commissary products are ordered and handled at UCI.** In response to a question we asked about why there is not a real-time running inventory that inmates can see if something is out of stock in the moment when ordering on the tablet, we learned that is not possible due to the logistics of how products are ordered from Union Supply and distributed here. Mr. Strickland explained that UCI does not store all products offered through Commissary on site at USCF.

Some food products are stored at the USCF warehouse here, while all non-food items are stored at the Union Supply warehouse in Reno Nevada. UCI Commissary receives shipments on a truck every Thursday from Union Supply, but there is a two-week turn around on updating inventory from when stock is ordered by UCI staff and when it is delivered to Utah.

Mr. Strickland explained that UCI staff keeps an inventory of anticipated needs of various products and works to anticipate the supplies of various products it needs to keep on hand. For example, they try to estimate and keep 3 month of supplies on hand for in-demand products like Ramen noodles. For other food

items that might expire more quickly, they can only keep a 3 – 4 week inventory on hand. The warehouse in Salt Lake City has room to keep about 30 days worth of food that is anticipated to be ordered. If the truck of products comes on time, each week, that should keep their warehouse filled.

However, if Union Supply's vendor runs short, then Utah's Commissary will run out. It was also acknowledged that at times there has been poor communication between UCI and the vendors and they are working to get that resolved.

**This is complicated because this year, Union Supply merged with Aramark which is yet another vendor for prison commissary products.** Strickland explained that Union Supply has been trying to reduce its own product inventory due to this merger. Union Supply still exists, and will continue to be the vendor for the quarterly gift packages. But Aramark is taking over Union Supply.

He also explained that while the primary vendor is Union Supply / Aramark, those companies deal with other vendors. Various vendors throughout the country enter into and lose contracts with the major prison commissary vendors, which results in fluctuating prices of products, changes in available products and brands. In addition, over the past few years, some suppliers that used to supply prison commissary vendors have gone out of business completely. Incarcerated customers may have noticed a recent change in the sausage offerings they can purchase. It is due to a change in vendors, resulting in a change of product, and a change in pricing.

**UCI Commissary is now fully staffed with 5 state employees** who oversee the actual operations including supervising the incarcerated employees. In addition, Aramark/Union Supply has an employee who will soon be working on site at USCF to manage inventory control in the USCF warehouse to assure it remains full. Strickland also acknowledged that UCI has some responsibility for out of stock food items if they are not ordered early enough to prevent the inventory becoming too low. Hopefully with the commissary being fully staffed, this will not happen as frequently.

**A quick turnaround from when commissary is ordered, the truck arrives, and distribution.** We learned that the items are ordered during the week and the orders are sent off to Union Supply /Aramark. The truck from Reno comes in on Thursday. UCI staff stocks on Friday so that commissary bags can be packed and orders filled and ready to go on Monday. UCI staff works regular weekday hours with holidays and weekends off.

**Spoiled, moldy, or out of date food items.** We discussed reports of individuals receiving moldy, stale or out of date food items through commissary. The biggest complaints we have received about moldy or stale food are pastries. Strickland explained that when pastries are

received, they are supposed to be received fresh from the supplier and the commissary staff is supposed to be watching the expiration dates. He also stated that if UCI receives expired or damaged goods, they send them back. All food must have a shelf life of 90 days left on it when they receive it. He said they are not receiving complaints of moldy pastry products, so if someone receives a moldy product, they should report it.

**Different Use By, Expiration, and Purchase Dates.** Some dates on food products are "Best Use By" dates. Others are printed with the "Best Purchase By" dates which means the product is still good. Others have an "Expiration Date."

**The process of commissary delivery of bags to incarcerated consumers.** Cody Strickland explained the following process that is supposed to be followed when a commissary bag is delivered to a purchaser. When it is handed out, the inmate is supposed to open the bag in front of the officer delivering it and look through it to make sure everything in it is correct and not damaged, moldy, etc. The officer is supposed to write down the Bill of Lading (BOL) information. And the

captain or lieutenant should oversee everything and scan the BOL back to UCI. Inmates are supposed to show their IDs and sign the BOL to receive the commissary bag. Anything that is returned is supposed to be uploaded in the file to create a credit for the inmate as quickly as possible. We asked if all officers can be trained in this process so it is consistent each week and in each housing area.

**Returns.** Electronics has a 30-day return/ repair policy. If an expensive clothing item like a pair of shoes is faulty (tears, blows out) within a reasonable time of receiving it, you can write to Cody Strickland with all of the specific information requesting to exchange them for replacement.

**UCI Commissary** is working toward improvements in keeping a full inventory and anticipating future sales in order to reduce incidents of out-of-stock items. It has steps in place to monitor the quality of food items and to reduce incidents of out-of-date items being overlooked and ending up in the bags going out to incarcerated persons.

***"Like a tiny candle in a dark room, just a bit of positivity can cancel out a whole lot of negativity."* Unknown**

### *Dell-Emerald Topics* **Women in Dell Prepare Garden Space at USCF**

By Molly Prince from an article on KSL.com July 12, 2024 and information from UDC's Facebook Videos

In the heat of mid-July, women residents of the Dell Unit at USCF worked to tear out sod, roll it up and load it onto a truck as the first step in preparing the soil to plant a garden. This is the beginning of realizing a dream for the women's facility to have a garden which will produce herbs and vegetables that can be used in the culinary program, and provide a soul nourishing activity of planting and cultivating living plants while making a sanctuary that helps to connect them with the earth and life amid the concrete and steel of prison life.

According to an article on KSL posted on July 12<sup>th</sup> Warden Derick Zorn was the catalyst behind getting this project approved. In the July 27<sup>th</sup> UDC Facebook video post, Sgt. Naccarato explains how she advocated for the garden. She saw the value of a garden and put together a budget and plan including a mock-up of the garden. Zorn presented the proposal to administration. He saw how much a community garden helped inmates at the old Utah State Prison. Zorn and Naccarato understand the value the garden will provide as a positive and healthy emotional outlet. It will be a community space where women who have reached certain privilege levels can spend their free time. The KSL article states, "Facility staff hope the garden will help women develop skills and improve mental health." In addition, Zorn says the vegetables grown there are intended to contribute to the facility's culinary arts program.

The article quotes several incarcerated women about the creation of this garden space. "A lot of girls have been working hard and pushing hard to have something like

this," Kassie Tolman said. She continued, "When we're able to do stuff together, it brings down violence, drug issues, and helps people be sober. Whatever I can do to get involved, I do it."

In Shellaine Williams' view, the garden helps the women feel more compassionate. Gardening is meditative and connects her to her senses, Williams said. "You learn how to be human again, because sometimes you detach from that part of yourself."

Marilee Gardner says the garden can help her grow and learn there's more to life than prison. "It gives a sense of belonging and hope, that we're not just looked at as numbers," Gardner said.

Kimberly Cruz Romero is quoted as saying that programs like the garden program remind incarcerated people of their life before prison, and their potential life after. She stated that it helps to provide a sense of normalcy and that people "can use this time to better yourself."

A formerly incarcerated individual shared comments on the UDC Facebook page about this development. M.F. wrote that when she was in Timpanogos in Draper, "The garden provided so much for our building and taught us so much about working together and building as a community!"

Other comments on the UDC Facebook page from family members of incarcerated and correctional staff include surprise, appreciation, and support for this new



development. Karen writes, "Gardening is the most amazing and therapeutic activity! What a great opportunity for these women."

Joanne writes, "The garden will not only provide fresh fruits and vegetables for the facility, but also serve as a productive and therapeutic activity for inmates. It is a great opportunity for personal growth and skill-building. Let's continue to cultivate positivity and growth in our

<https://www.ksl.com/article/51067804/use-this-time-to-better-yourself-women-inmates-plant-garden-at-utah-state-prison>

## **IPP Information: Navigating Life Behind Bars at Uintah County Jail**

By Shane Severson, UPAN Director of Communications

In this edition of our UPAN Newsletter, we spotlight Uintah County Jail and its relation to the Inmate Placement Program (IPP). Established in 1987 to address overcrowding in Utah State Prison, the IPP allows the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) to contract with county jails to house state offenders. Travis Knorr, appointed as UDC Director of the IPP in November 2023, brings extensive correctional experience to enhance the program's effectiveness. The UDC is tasked with ensuring compliance with health, safety, and security standards through routine inspections and annual audits.

Incarcerated individuals are selected for IPP based on security level, health status, and criminal background. Offenders with high medical or mental health needs remain in state facilities. Transfers can be initiated through case managers, considering factors like family proximity or what programs are available in each jail that an offender may need.

**Overview of Uintah County Jail.** Uintah County Sheriff Steve Labrum oversees the administration and jail. Located in Vernal, Utah, the facility has 384 beds, with 248 contracted for male state incarcerated individuals—however approximately 135 state male incarcerated individuals are presently housed there, subject to fluctuation. Recently appointed Jail Commander Jesse Tucker has initiated policy revisions and engages personally with incarcerated individuals during monthly visits to living areas.

**Communication and Visitation.** Securus provides communication services, including Video Connect, AdvanceConnect, Securus Debit, eMessaging, Videogram, and Snap n' Send. AdvanceConnect allows families to manage prepaid calling accounts. A 15-minute call to Salt Lake City costs approximately \$3.60. Incarcerated individuals can only make outgoing calls.

There is no in-person contact visitation. Visitation is conducted through video using the Securus website, app, or facility kiosk. Remote visits cost \$4.50 for 15 minutes and \$8.50 for 30 minutes. Visits must be scheduled and paid for in advance. Video visits have been reported to have poor quality with frequent technical issues.

community!"

Gayle comments, "What a blessing to have this special space for our women to cultivate, harvest, and partake of nutritious fruits and vegetables! These lifelong living skills are necessary for wellness and healing."

The vision is that as it develops and grows, the garden "will become an oasis in a sea of concrete, and a respite in a challenging environment."

Communication services are available from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., with restrictions during lockdowns, counts, and other activities. Scheduled counts occur at 8:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 6:00 p.m., lasting 30-60 minutes. Additional services include fund deposits, electronic messaging, video creation, and photo sharing. Each transaction requires a digital "stamp" costing \$0.50. Securus tablets in each pod facilitate these services.

**Mail / Books / Packages:** Mail should be addressed to: Incarcerated Individual's Name, Inmate #, Uintah County Jail, 641 East 300 South Suite 150, Vernal, Utah, 84078

Include a full return address. All mail is screened for safety and security. Prohibited items include nudity, gang-related content, coded messages, or security risks.

Books can be purchased from Barnes & Noble or Hamilton Book (used). Incarcerated individuals can keep up to 5 books in their cell and 5 in storage. Magazine subscriptions are allowed but must not contain staples, glued backs, or explicit content. Newspapers are not permitted. Packages must be sent directly from distributors through recognized carriers.

**Incarcerated Individual Accounting and Commissary.** Money can be sent via cashier's check, money order made out to the incarcerated individual, or deposited using the commissary kiosk in the jail lobby or online through JailATM.com.

Commissary prices at Uintah County Jail are high compared to the state prisons. A pack of ramen costs \$1.10, and hygiene items are similarly expensive. Incarcerated individuals may opt for "hot cart" offerings for premium food entrees, which cost \$5 to \$7 each. JailATM charges a 10% processing fee for account deposits.

**Medical and Mental Health Services.** Medical services, including daily pill lines, are accessible. Mental health services are available, and those on certain medications can be housed at the facility. Eye and dental care require travel to USCF in Salt Lake City.

**HB157 State-Funded Programs.** House Bill 157 (Justice Reinvestment Amendments), passed by the Utah Legislature in 2018, provides funding for cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) classes and vocational training programs, adding "alternative treatment" programs to the

existing substance abuse, alcohol abuse, and sex offense treatment programs. These programs aim to reduce recidivism through education and skill development. Currently, Uintah County Jail does not provide a Sex-Offender Treatment Program (SOTP) or Substance-Abuse Treatment Program that qualifies under HB157. However, AA & NA is available thru LDS volunteers. Uintah County Jail offers several programs under HB157, including Challenge, Inside Out Dad, Moral Recognition Therapy (MRT), and Victim Impact. The facility also provides classes on alcohol and substance abuse, as well as AA and NA groups.

Inside Out Dad sessions are offered regularly but space is very limited, and classes tend to fill up fast. Incarcerated individuals from pods with higher alphabetical designations often find the class at capacity before they can sign up. The Challenge program has not been offered since October 2022 due to the need for an instructor.

**Incarcerated Individual Employment.** The jail offers up to 41 job opportunities, including janitors, kitchen workers, laundry workers, car washers, tierman, teacher's aids, and librarians. Currently, about 25 positions are filled, with the number fluctuating based on operational needs and logistical considerations.

**Educational Opportunities.** High school diplomas and GEDs can be earned through the Uintah School District and Ashley Valley Education Center (AVEC) Corrections Education program, directed by Andrea McKea. Skylar Seitz, who has been teaching the programs for about a year, has been credited with making a significant impact. The facility recently transitioned to the Pearson VUE Connect testing platform. The facility also offers vocational and computer classes, life skills training, as well as self-help courses on anger management,

**Contact Information.** For IPP information: 14717 S. Minuteman Drive, Draper, UT 84020 Call 801-545-5558 or visit <https://corrections.utah.gov/county-jail-program/>.

UDC IPP Case Manager for Uintah County Jail: Rue Larsen, 435-650-9023, [ruelarsen@utah.gov](mailto:ruelarsen@utah.gov).

Uintah County Jail: 641 East 300 South, Suite 150 Vernal, UT 84078 Call 435-781-5422 or visit <https://www.uintah.gov>.

**Note:** Policies and programs may change. Verify current information with the facility or appropriate authorities.

### **Couple of Smiles and Maybe a Laugh**

What kind of dog always knows the time? A watch dog ~ What starts with an E, ends with an E but only has one letter in it? Envelope ~ What did the green grape say to the purple grape? BREATHE!!!! ~ I excel at sleeping, in fact, I can do it with my eyes closed ~ Where do rabbits go for breakfast? IHOP ~ A alligator wearing a vest is an investigator.

***The month of August is hot. As in many things, the challenge is staying cool! If you do, you do good! Ed.***

Chief Newsletter Editor: Molly Prince, LCSW

Detail Newsletter Editor: Warren Rosenbaum (aka Ed.)

### **Utah Prisoner Advocate Network Contact Info**

#### **Our Contact Information:**

Utah Prisoner Advocate Network  
P. O. Box 464, Draper, UT 84020

Website: [UtahPrisonerAdvocate.org](http://UtahPrisonerAdvocate.org)

Email: [Utahprisoneradvocate@gmail.com](mailto:Utahprisoneradvocate@gmail.com)

Facebook: [Facebook.com/UtahPrisoner](https://www.facebook.com/UtahPrisonerAdvocate)

***“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead***

financial literacy, parenting, and stress management, among others.

**Tablets and Entertainment.** Securus tablets offer free educational resources, podcasts, e-books, and FM radio. Premium content is available through an \$8 monthly subscription, allowing incarcerated individuals to purchase premium music, games, or rent movies that generally range from \$3-\$9 each.

**Recreational Facilities.** Those incarcerated at Uintah have access to the rec yard for three hours per week per pod. The rec yard is a cement enclosure with limited sunlight, where incarcerated individuals can play handball or pickleball. Extended recreation time may be allowed at correctional officers' discretion.

**Religious Services and Volunteer Programs.** The jail offers religious services provided by volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and the Vernal Christian Church. AA and NA programs are also available, primarily through LDS Church volunteers. Feedback from incarcerated individuals suggests that religious services are consistent, although access can vary between pods. All religious property items must be approved on a case-by-case basis by Sergeant Shields.

**Hobbies and Personal Development.** Eligible incarcerated individuals can apply for a Hobby Craft Contract, granting access to art or crochet supplies. Supplies must be purchased from approved vendors such as Dick Blick or Herrschners. Additional supplies may be stored in property storage.

**Property During Transport or Transfers.** Property rules vary during transfers. Typically, incarcerated individuals are limited to essential items and may need to send excess property to family or donate it.