



UPAN Newsletter Volume 12 Number 6 | **June 2025**
“Empowerment and Growth Through Knowledge and Unity”

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**Consider Donating to UPAN – Tips to Fathers in Prison – UDC Family Orientation Jun 5th
 MAT Update – *Dell Discussions* Student Center in Dell – PREA Info – College Ed:Dr Sam
 College Courses in IPP Adams State Univ – A Fresh Start, Homeownership – USCF
 Horticultural Program –USCF Optometry Clinic– 2025 Legislation Recap Part 2**

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Next Meeting: Monday, June 9, 2025 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM Zoom meeting: Mark Hugentobler speaking on the Freedom Scholars Academy AND Paige Norton speaking on the DOJO Academy <https://bit.ly//UPAN-Meet>
NO Meeting in July!

Following Meeting: Monday, August 11, 2025 6:30 PM – 8:30 PM Jared Hill, CMHC who is the new Director of SOTP for UDC on Risk Assessments and Recidivism! (A subject to be recognized and acted upon, Ed)

September: Tyler Hansen from Steps Recovery Center ***Join all meetings at*** <https://bit.ly//UPAN-Meet>

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.

Families and Friends – Consider a Donation to Keep UPAN Going

UPAN is a non-profit organization dedicated to advocating for your incarcerated loved ones to have improved and safe living conditions, employment, educational, programming and treatment opportunities, as well as improved medical, mental health care, and many other issues while incarcerated and beyond.

Our organization is made up of dedicated individuals who freely give their time without any pay and provide personal resources (computers, phones, office space,

transportation, etc.) at their own expense. In addition we have financial needs for postage, envelopes, other office supplies, computer programs, Zoom and online platforms and security, etc. to carry on our work to benefit your loved ones. Please consider donating \$10, \$20 or whatever you can so that we may continue to provide the services needed to make a positive difference for your loved ones.

To donate go to utahprisoneradvocate.org or mail to UPAN, PO Box 464, Draper, Utah 84020 Thank you!

Father's Day in Prison: Parenting Tips for Dads Behind Bars Primary Source: See link at end.

Father's Day is June 15, 2025 this year. Parenting from prison can be challenging. The following information includes 10 tips that could help grow your relationship with your children. It is taken directly from the Prison Fellowship's article (link below) and is based on a resource put out by the National Fatherhood Initiative's "Staying Involved with Your Children While Incarcerated." **Families can also access more information** and resources to print and send to fathers at **fatherhood.org** for more resources that promote father involvement.

If you have children, you can use your incarceration to build strong relationships with them. Even if you don't think you've been a very good dad in the past, you can now use this time to make a fresh start in parenting.

Be sure to follow all court orders and policies of the correctional facility you reside in. If you have a restraining order or visitation restrictions, some of these ideas will need to wait.

1) Take the first step. Reach out and connect. Your children might not be able to visit you often, but you can still write to them as long as there is not a court order or restriction in place. *Even if they don't write back, keep writing.* You can write short letters with the various thoughts you jot down throughout the day or over a period of days. You do not have to complete one letter all in one sitting.

If your children write you a letter or send pictures they drew, write them and thank them, let them know you received it and respond to what they said or drew.

When possible, try to talk with your kids whenever you call home. Learn more about their personal lives, school, and friendships. What are your children's favorite hobbies? What do they like to do in their spare time?

Some children are learning a new language in school. Why not learn it along with them? You could even write simple letters to each other in the new language.

2) Become a long-distance coach or fan.

Does one of your kids like basketball, football, or some other team sport? Does another one dance? Does another want to be the next great figure skater? Is one child a fan of games like chess or Scrabble?

Learn all you can about the activities that mean the most to your children.⁶ When you do, you'll be better equipped to encourage them. You'll also have more to talk about in letters, in phone calls, and during visits.

3) Assure your children that they are not responsible for your absence. Children often think they are somehow to blame for a parent's absence or imprisonment. Reassure them that they are not at fault.

If they ask questions about your situation, give age-appropriate, truthful answers. Lying can trigger anxiety, build distrust, and cause them to withdraw from you.

4) Reassure your children that you love and accept them, no matter what! Think about how you communicate with your kids. How often do you compliment them? How often do you reassure them of their worth, or let them know you appreciate them? How often do you let them know you are proud of what they are doing in their lives? Look for the little things, not just the big things, to point out the positive traits they have.

Boost your child's confidence by regularly affirming their unique qualities. When a child is assured of their parents' love, they're less likely to look for it in other—sometimes unhealthy—ways.

5) Get involved in any available programs in your facility. In many prisons and jails, one way you can show your love is through Prison Fellowship Angel Tree®. Through Angel Tree, you can sign up your children to receive Christmas gifts purchased and delivered by local churches but given in your name. You can even include a personal message to your children.

Angel Tree Every Day™ offers year-round opportunities, resources, and encouragement, along with events such as sports clinics and summer camps in participating locations. For more information, ask your chaplain or religious services coordinator (or they can call **1-800-55ANGEL**).

Chaplains or ministry volunteers can contact Prison Ministry at **InsideJournal@pfm.org** to learn more! They can also bulk order (25 or more) for the FREE quarterly *Inside Journal* newspaper to distribute behind bars.

6) Be willing to take appropriate, healthy risks for your children. Admit to your kids you have made some bad choices. Ask them to forgive you for the ways you have hurt them. Not easy! But by taking this risk, you will begin to rebuild strong bonds with your children.

Be willing to risk receiving their anger or other strong emotions. Accept that their feelings are normal and don't make them feel guilty or ashamed for having them. Be open to letting them talk thru their feelings and concerns with you. This helps them see that you are a safe person for them, someone they can trust to be there for them.

Be willing to answer questions, at an age appropriate level if they come up during this conversation.

7) Respect your children's caregiver, other parent, or guardian. It's hard when you can't have daily input on your children's upbringing. You may not always agree with what your child's caregiver is doing. Even so, be careful to speak about and treat the caregiver respectfully. Hearing you insult or criticize the person

taking care of your children will only add to their stress and confusion.

8) Help your kids to be kids. Many children of prisoners take on more adult responsibilities—such as helping care for younger brothers and sisters or doing more chores in the home. When they come to visit you, make time to relax and play with them. Avoid the temptation to vent your frustrations to your children, even if they seem mature for their age.

9) Seek Help to become a better father. Look for programs and other resources to help you become a better father. Perhaps your facility offers the InsideOut Dad program or Parenting courses. Check with your

Link: <https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/support-friends-family-of-prisoners/prisoner-resources/10-parenting-tips-for-dads-behind-bars/>

A father's love is forever imprinted on his child's heart. Jennifer Williamson

Is Your Loved One in Prison? Confused About How Things Work?
Attend the UDC Family Orientation Thursday June 5, 2025

Attend the quarterly Family Orientation is scheduled for **6:30 – 8:30 p.m. on Thursday June 5, 2025** at the Fred House Academy, 14727 Minuteman Drive, in Draper. This is the building south of the UDC Administration building. Officials will explain the processes in various areas of the prison including mail, property,

NOTE: Virtual Option: Will be livestreamed on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/@UtahCorrections>

Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) Update from the Utah 2025 Legislative Session

Summarized by Molly Prince, LCSW

The Utah legislature appropriated additional funds for MAT in Utah's 2 prisons. This article is simply sharing what we have learned from the DHHS Director over Correctional Health Services.

- 1 - The funding is to be allocated in portions once a year for the next 5 years.
- 2 - This new funding is set to be started for the new fiscal year, the 2025 - 2026 fiscal year, which begins in July.
- 3 - When asked about the new program / policy, we were told that the MAT & UDC Medical Team who administer MAT attended a meeting with SAMSA and several other states in Arizona in April. They are working on the updated policy for expansion of the program and learning best practices for MAT in correctional facilities to help them create the expanded policy that UDC will use.
- 4 - We were also told that Correctional Health Services is working with U of U and their experts on MAT in USCF and CUCF as consultants. UDC and DHHS (Correctional Health Services) are required to make the program expansion and how it is administered follow the criteria given by the Utah Legislature with the funding.
- 5 - When asked if there is a timeline by which MAT will be expanded, we were told they could not give a date now or make promises before knowing more about what the expanded program will look like, policies to be

case manager, volunteers, housing staff, and administration staff to find out what's available.

10) Focus on sending positive thoughts, energy and prayers for your children. Take time out several times a day to think about your children and send loving, positive thoughts, energy, and / or prayers to and for them. Do this during the numerous times you are required to stand in lines or wait in prison. During count, as you're standing in the chow line, while folding laundry.

Dull moments in prison can be meaningful as you keep your children in your thoughts and lift them up in your thoughts. Spend downtime writing down thoughts and share some things that you feel they might be interested in with them. *Many ideas in this article come from the above referenced article from Prison Fellowship.*

inmate accounting, visiting, phone use, case managers, and medical. Representatives from the Board of Pardons & Parole will be there as well. Recommended for all families and friends involved in the prison system. For more info: corrections@utah.gov

<https://www.youtube.com/@UtahCorrections>

followed, and the processes necessary to get it implemented.

For now, the criteria for MAT to be started when someone enters prison is the same as it has been this past year that it has been up and running - they must have proof and records of receiving it in community immediately prior to incarceration.

We know that UDC and DHHS administrators were at the State Capitol a lot during this past session, basically begging for more funding for everything related to medical, mental health, and substance use care and treatment, including funding specifically for MAT. Some of the UPAN directors testified in support of expanded funding when some legislators were reluctant to fund.

Many programs across the entire state (not just Corrections) took a hit and lost funding this year, so it is good that they decided to allocate funds for MAT. Unfortunately, the wheels turn very slowly in a system as big as this. But it's a step forward that we did not have this time last year.

"The greatest mark of a father is how he treats his children when no one is looking." Dan Pearce

Dell Discussions **Student Center in Dell** Submitted by a member of the Dell Community

We have opened a student center to assist everyone with their educational needs. Practice your reading, brush up on math, have a quiet place for homework, and get one-on-one assistance with a tutor.

The Center is open Mondays & Tuesdays from 1 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Please sign up for a time slot at the chapel.

“We are stronger when we listen, and smarter when we share.” Rania Al-Abdullah

PREA Issues – Rape Recovery Center is Partnered with UDC

Submitted by Saane Saile, RRC PREA Coordinator

The Rape Recovery Center (RRC) in Utah offers specialized services for incarcerated survivors of sexual violence through compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). Their advocacy programs are designed to support individuals within correctional facilities, providing trauma-informed care that is tailored to the unique challenges faced by incarcerated survivors.

Through confidential support, RRC empowers survivors to navigate their healing journey, ensuring access to essential services and resources. Their commitment to

(Limit one time slot per person per day.) Funding is provided by the University of Utah and a grant from the Utah Humanities.

For more information and / or to make a donation, visit prisoneducationproject.utah.edu and click on the tab that says “Student Center.”

servicing incarcerated individuals reflects a dedication to comprehensive care and justice for all survivors.

The RRC’s PREA program includes two trained advocates who can meet with incarcerated individuals one-on-one, who have experienced sexual assault in the past (for example as a child) or recently. Clients can reach us by phone, 385-271-1168, letter-writing to P.O. Box 26625 Salt Lake City, Utah 84126, emails (prea@raperecoverycenter.org), and in person at our Salt Lake City office. We also run a support group in the Salt Lake prison for women that focuses on teaching healthy relationship skills and healing.

**Education as a Catalyst: Dr. Sam Arungwa's Vision for Utah's Incarcerated
Summary of April 18, 2025 UPAN Meeting** By Molly Prince, LCSW

The April 18, 2025 Utah Prisoner Advocate Network meeting featured Dr. Samuel Arungwa, a distinguished crime prevention scientist with nearly two decades of experience in criminal justice, sociology, and educational reform. Also known as Dr. Sam, he is the founder and CEO of the Prevention Science Corporation, a nonprofit organization that focuses on addressing public safety and educational inequities using innovative, low-cost solutions. Prior to this, he served for over a decade as assistant professor at Utah State University within the Dept. of Sociology and Anthropology from 2012 to 2023.

Dr. Sam presented twice before to UPAN families, the first time in August 2023. He shared his transformative work to expand access to **free, college-level education** for incarcerated individuals and correctional staff across Utah.

Dr. Sam updated on his pilot programs in San Juan and Juab County Jails. His educational model uses surplus resources, open educational content, volunteer professors, and partnerships with local institutions like Snow College to deliver **zero-cost, credit-bearing college classes** in jails. Notably, Snow College awarded scholarships to Juab County inmates, while Dr. Sam taught for-credit criminal justice courses as an unpaid adjunct instructor.

Dr. Sam’s approach is backed by research that demonstrates the efficacy of post-secondary correctional education (PSCE) in reducing recidivism and improving

behavior within correctional facilities, using low-cost, community-led, and volunteer-driven models. Through the Sheriff in San Juan County Jail, Utah became one of the first states to participate in this groundbreaking program a few years ago. He recently completed teaching a course in the Juab County Jail as an adjunct professor for Snow College.

College Education is a ‘Vaccine’ Against Crime. Dr. Sam emphasized his belief that higher education is the most effective ‘vaccine’ against crime and recidivism. He called for expanding his model statewide and even nationally, noting that 100% implementation would result in massive public savings—potentially over \$2 million per week in Utah alone. He also advocated for legislative and executive support, including a proposed bill being filed by Representative Logan Monson. He has met with Governor Spencer Cox who also thinks this is a great approach.

Incarcerated TAs and RAs. A visionary strategy discussed by Dr. Sam involves training incarcerated individuals to become Teaching Assistants (TAs), Research Assistants (RAs), and even professors—highlighting the groundbreaking example of David Carrillo in Colorado, the first known ‘incarcerated professor.’ This scalable approach offers a sustainable, internal system of peer-led education within correctional facilities.

His work is grounded in the principle that education is one of the most effective tools for crime prevention and rehabilitation. Dr. Sam's mission is deeply personal and global in scope—initially inspired by his desire to improve public safety in his native Nigeria, he has since committed to systemic reform in the United States, where he leverages technology, partnerships, and a deep understanding of correctional education to reach incarcerated individuals across Utah and beyond.

*“The United States has the highest number of incarcerated people in the world, with nearly two million currently behind bars. **More than 600,000 people are held in local jails**, where most are awaiting sentencing. Recidivism rates are high, with one in four jailed individuals returning to jail within a year of release. Yet opportunities for rehabilitation are few and far between in the U.S., say the researchers.”* Harvard Law Today, Rachel Reed, April 2, 2024. Link at end of article.

IGNITE Initiative. A highlight of Dr. Sam's recent work is the IGNITE initiative—'Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education'—a pioneering national study led by Harvard and Brown Universities. IGNITE is designed to test whether post-secondary correctional education (PSCE) programs, when delivered in small, rural county jails using existing staff and volunteer resources, can yield the same powerful outcomes as those seen in larger state prison settings.

The IGNITE study has confirmed that PSCE reduces recidivism by up to 50%, lowers inmate misconduct by 25%, and can be implemented without any additional taxpayer funding. This model emphasizes the use of

“Alongside movements to end mass incarceration, we believe there needs to be a fundamental shift in how we treat those who are incarcerated.” Prof. Crystal S. Yang, Harvard Law Expert, and co-author of IGNITE study.

For more information on the IGNITE Model, go to <https://hls.harvard.edu/today/harvard-law-researcher-finds-positive-results-from-jail-education-program-in-michigan/>

Also <https://www.corrections1.com/re-entry-and-recidivism/harvard-confirms-flint-jail-program-cuts-recidivism>

“Great Stories Begin Here” – A Prison College Experience with Adams State University

By Alexander Winward (IPP resident of a Utah jail)

I was fresh out of high school when I was arrested for the crimes that landed me in prison. While college was always a part of the plan for me, I never imagined I'd be pursuing a degree while behind bars. I began taking college courses through Adams State University at the age of twenty, almost two years into my sentence back in 2019. It was an opportunity that my gracious parents insisted on facilitating, knowing one day I'd be released from prison and have to make something of myself—which is to say, not live in their basement for the rest of my life. Almost six years later, my formal education (for now) has come to an end. To help anyone interested in pursuing a college education behind bars, I thought I'd share some thoughts and considerations regarding college in prison and my journey through the Adams State University Prison Education Program (PEP).

community volunteers and current jail staff, demonstrating that even non-accredited, skills-based courses can yield meaningful improvements in behavior and post-release outcomes. Utah's San Juan County Jail was one of the first to pilot this type of program in Utah, with Dr. Sam offering the pilot program there.

IGNITE has garnered national recognition and support, including interest from the National Sheriffs' Association and the White House. The study's results have empowered advocates like Dr. Sam to promote post-secondary education as a proven, scalable solution to crime, recidivism, and the high costs of incarceration. By combining research, real-world results, and strategic collaboration, IGNITE is helping redefine the future of corrections and rehabilitation across the country.

Dr. Sam concluded by committing to share fact sheets and FAQs with UPAN to be distributed to families to facilitate effective advocacy with lawmakers, emphasizing that education inside prisons benefits all of society—not just the incarcerated. He encouraged participants to get involved, even dedicating just one minute a week to support the cause. (Note, UPAN has not yet received these fact sheets.)

Dr. Sam's work aligns powerfully with UPAN's mission of promoting rehabilitation, second chances, and equitable opportunities for incarcerated Utahns. His passionate, data-backed, and resource-savvy approach has created a hopeful path toward systemic educational access behind bars.

First Things First. The bottom line is this: it is not easy being an incarcerated student. In this system, there are more obstacles to getting a formal education than not. For me, the limiting factors came down to three things: paying for school, being able to complete what was paid for in a reasonable timeframe, and having access to my textbooks and other needs as a student. It was only through outside financial, moral, and administrative support, as well as working with administrators in my facility that helped me accomplish my goal.

Cost. While the application fee for the school is waived, Adams State doesn't offer any grants, financial assistance, or loans; all classes must be paid for up front upon registration at the beginning of each semester. For each three-credit class, we were spending, on average, \$800 to \$1,000, including the textbooks which generally

must be purchased separately. Multiply this by the 40 classes (120 credits) I needed to graduate with a Bachelor's, and you'll get a rough estimate of the overall cost. Not cheap! Given the average inmate's pay, unless I planned on making my educational pursuit in prison a life sentence, I had to rely on my support as a means of paying for classes.

Time and Book Constraints. Fortunately, I had some college credits I earned in high school to give me a jumpstart towards earning my degree. Adams State honored all of them. From early on, I developed a schedule that worked for me and facilitated my study time. I did schoolwork Monday through Friday for two to four hours, constantly sending out letters and work to my professor. A normal course load for me was usually two classes (six credits) at the same time, which is half the normal amount to be considered a full-time student per semester. Though I could have signed up for more, I was limited by the amount of textbooks I could have in my cell. This was a source of much contention between me and the jail, since some classes require multiple books. (My paralegal classes had a half-dozen!) Thankfully, the jail allowed me to keep textbooks down in the schoolroom and swap them out with the teacher there as I needed them instead of resorting to the week-long property exchange process.

While this ultimately did slow me down, working two classes at any given point gave me the best balance in terms of speed and efficiency, so that I could finish the two and start two new ones at the beginning of each semester without overlapping them. Incarcerated students in PEP are given a year to complete their class, which is more than enough; but again, I didn't have the luxury of having access to all the textbooks I needed for a full course load. Working consistently year-round, averaging 15–20 credits per year, it would take me just under six years to get all the credits needed for my Bachelor's Degree.

Teamwork. Ultimately, my success and speed in PEP came down to one thing: my mother. While Adams State has in place the ability for inmates to conduct business and order textbooks via mail, this would take forever. Moreover, PEP students are working against the same class registration deadlines as normal students. If you miss the deadline, you have to wait a month or two before registration for the next semester opens again. My mom, working as my biggest cheerleader, took it upon herself to order the books, register me for classes, and communicate with my academic advisor, which is more exhausting than it sounds. She was more excited for me to graduate than I was! All the while, I was working with my case worker who served as my exam proctor and the sergeant in my

jail who had to approve all my textbooks for purchase, since neither the school nor Amazon were approved vendors. Without the help of my mother or support from the administrators in my facility, I would not be writing this today.

Adams State University. In general, I was satisfied with my experience. Adams State is known as one of the better correspondence education programs in the country, but they are not without their problems. My mother, in serving as my liaison with the University, often complained that the PEP department was understaffed, resulting in long waiting times for calls or no one answering the phone at all. My academic advisor and the program director were best reached by email; and if there was a problem with anything, they resolved them in short order.

I enjoyed my professors. The only real learning you get from them, though, is through their course notes or direct feedback on assignments. Compared to other correspondence programs I've seen, Adams State offers the most variety and the greatest leeway to professors in how students complete their assignments. Generally, the classes are not cookie-cutter, but many are as simple as reading the textbook, answering questions or analyzing case studies on what you read, then writing an essay at the end of each unit. If you don't like to write a lot, a correspondence course is not for you.

The more memorable classes were my writing ones. They were by far the most work, but the most rewarding; the professors were also super involved and dedicated to their craft. One of them even helped me get some of my poetry published. In my upper-division business classes, however, one or two of my professors were about as useful as stubbed toes. I only heard from these once in a semester—usually at the very end when they tell you your assignment formatting is wrong, and that's why you have a C. As a rule, the higher the level of business class, the more less-involved and aloof the professors become. There were always exceptions, though, and the program and its teachers regularly change and adapt.

In the End. I graduated with honors at the beginning of this year—a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and a minor in Legal Studies. It is, I hope, the first step in overcoming the choices that led me to prison, but also the disadvantages that will come as a felon out of prison and the misery of my mother's basement. The only way I did it was with the support of my loved ones and the people around me. And if you have the means, support, and time, I recommend Adams State as a starting place for your great story.

**For more information on Adams State's PEP and course offerings, write to:
Prison Education Program, Adams State University, 208 Edgemont Blvd. Suite 3000. Alamosa, CO 81101**

“You know who's going through a lot right now? Literally everyone. Just be kind.” Anonymous

**From Incarceration to Homeownership:
Leveraging Utah Correctional Work Experience for a Fresh Start** by Nadine Salyer

In Utah, the journey from incarceration to reintegration is being reshaped by programs that acknowledge the value of work experience gained during incarceration. For many formerly incarcerated individuals and their families, this recognition has become a vital tool in achieving major life goals—such as qualifying for a mortgage.

Using Inmate Work Experience on Mortgage Applications The Utah Correctional Industries (UCI), under the Utah Department of Corrections (UDC), provides structured work programs for incarcerated individuals. These programs include skilled trades such as plumbing, electrical work, manufacturing, and office administration. While originally created to teach job skills and reduce recidivism, these roles have also proven essential for establishing a verifiable work history.

Many lenders require at least two years of steady employment history in order to approve a mortgage application. By listing the time worked in these correctional job programs—often under acronyms like UCI or UDOC—applicants can demonstrate the work experience needed without having to explicitly state that the work was done during incarceration.

Real-Life Examples: Experience That Opens Doors Our family's story is just one example. When we applied for a mortgage, my husband Jerry's time working at the Utah State Prison through UCI was included as part of the employment history. That made a big difference in helping us meet the lender's requirements. The documentation of his work helped show that he had been consistently employed, even though it was during his incarceration.

Friends of ours, S. & J. B., had a similar experience. He had worked through the Dept of Corrections as a plumber. By including this on his résumé and presenting it as verifiable work history, they were also able to successfully meet the qualifications for a home loan.

Another friend, Eric B., who trained as an apprentice electrician while incarcerated, was able to land a job

right after release. Since then, he's continued working and is now a licensed journeyman electrician, a great example of how experience gained during incarceration can lead directly to stable employment and growth.

Résumé Tips: Representing Your Experience Strategically. Beyond mortgage applications, this same correctional work experience can (and should) be included on résumés when applying for jobs. You don't have to explicitly mention that the work was done in prison—instead, you can use general or abbreviated job titles and organization names like:

- UCI Trades Program – Apprentice Electrician
- UDOC Facilities – Plumbing Assistant
- State Services Workshop – Manufacturing Tech

Using acronyms such as UCI (Utah Correctional Industries) or UDOC (Utah Department of Corrections) is a strategic way to show real work experience without creating obvious red flags for employers. This helps eliminate large gaps in employment history and shows that you remained active, consistent, and capable during your time away.

The key is to focus on the skills you developed and the roles you performed like teamwork, time management, trade skills, safety compliance, and reliability. Employers are looking for those traits regardless of where the experience came from.

Conclusion: Turning Time into Opportunity These stories show how work experience gained during incarceration, especially through structured programs like those offered by UCI and UDOC, can be a powerful tool for reintegration. It's not just about having something to put on a résumé, it's about showing real, relevant skills that employers and lenders recognize.

As more families and individuals in Utah learn how to use this experience to their advantage, we hope to see even more success stories like these—proof that the time served can become a foundation for something better.

“Any new beginning can start now. Find the courage to pursue it with all you have.” Nikki Rowe

“A dad is someone who wants to catch you when you fall.” Anonymous

USCF Horticulture Program – Tour of the Greenhouses on April 10, 2025

By Molly Prince, LCSW (UPAN) & Roni Wilcox (PAG)

On April 10, 2025, Molly Prince and Roni Wilcox had the privilege to tour the Horticulture Program (also known as Green Thumb) at USCF along with UDC's Esekia Afatasi and Aubrie Anderson. The program is located way out on the northern part of the prison campus, a significant distance away from the entry gates.

Even as we entered the gates into the greenhouse area, the energy of the area felt different from the rest of the prison areas we have visited. Calmer. Wide open spaces around a row of hoop house greenhouse buildings.

Todd Barszcz has been the director of this program for years. He has worked hard to design a productive

program with limited resources and a dedicated crew of up to 24 incarcerated men. These men have built the hoop houses and created the indoor watering systems for seedlings as well as installed the irrigation system. They also maintain every plant grown inside the greenhouses and the trees and water features installed in the acreage outside. Roni Wilcox, who runs Prisoner Advocate Group, is a Master Gardener by trade and was impressed by everything we saw during the two hours we were there.

Our first stop was in the office building where Director Todd Barszcz shared information about the Horticulture Program and the benefits to the incarcerated men who participate in it. We viewed some certificates of previous graduates of the program on the wall of the office.

Roni Wilcox was very impressed with the cataloging and saving of seeds of native varieties of plants as well as other seeds. These are all categorized in a refrigerated section of the office building.

Built from the ground up after the move to USCF. The move to the new USCF was accomplished three years ago this July. UDC did not incorporate new greenhouses into the construction of the new prison. After the move, incarcerated individuals have built every building and the hoop houses used as greenhouses at USCF for the new Green Thumb Nursery/Horticulture 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 maintaining a Horticulture Certificate Program.

We learned that when the prison moved from USP Draper, which had an established Green Thumb Nursery, to USCF, there was nothing prepared on the new prison's land to accommodate the program. Barszcz explained that he and the incarcerated men working the program designed and built everything from the ground up. They literally built all of the infrastructure needed to support the plants' development from the bare ground up. They did the research, learned the building codes. They built each of the hoop houses, designed and created the irrigation systems, as well as the tables and the water conservation system inside the greenhouses. All of this was done with Barszcz' goal to keep it eco-friendly and conserve water.

The men we talked to expressed their love of their work and the program. The horticulture program also offers valuable training to the incarcerated individuals participating in it who can eventually earn their certification which prepares them for gainful employment, and prosocial re-entry into the community!

The prisoners working in this program take pride in their work. Spending their days cultivating these plants provides them with a sense of meaning and purpose while serving their time in an otherwise difficult environment in Utah's prison system. This says a lot, because they work in grueling conditions, in the freezing temperatures and wind and snow of winter, to the rains

and winds of spring, to the scorching heat of summer. They are dedicated and their commitment is demonstrated by the success of this program.

A few partnerships the Greenhouse has with other organizations and the State of Utah include:

The **BYU Horticulture program** uses USCF as a reference for their greenhouses.

Utah-Native Plants: The USCF Greenhouse provides plants for state organizations and cooperatives that need Utah-native plants. This includes partnerships with 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.

Horticulture Apprenticeship: The Greenhouse program offers a 5-year program to obtain a nationally recognized Certification in Horticulture apprenticeship. It includes in-class learning as well as hands on learning that spans all aspects of horticulture including conservation, cultivating, propagating, and harvesting.

Educational Classes: The program includes classes for participants on plant care, the growing process, and general plant knowledge.

Plant Database Contribution: USCF provides information to the plant database used by nurseries and facilities to determine optimal growing times, seasons, and methods.

Contribute to the larger community. This program provides valuable skills that can be used upon re-entry, and contributes to the broader community on several levels.

Use of Local Sources. This enterprise sources its soil prep from the Miller Companies out of Hyrum, Utah. The program uses Miller Soil Prep, which Roni states is "an amazing product."

Barszcz took us on a walking tour of the grounds. We witnessed rows of trees planted that will eventually yield fruit. There are a variety of fruit trees. The watering system on the grounds is underground watering and drip systems, cutting down on water waste. They plant cover crops in the winter months. Cover crops put nutrients back into the soil and help keep the microbiome healthy and thriving.

In the hoop houses we saw the various stages of the growing process from seed starting and germination through growth, and maturation. One greenhouse we went into was full of fragrant herbs and edibles that was a joy to just stand and be present in.

We learned about how the tables in the greenhouses have custom trays for watering, designed by Barszcz and built for this program. It is an ingenious approach to conserving the precious water. This system recirculates the water, cutting water waste by 98%. The 2% is what the plants use. Universities with horticultural programs have used this as a template for what they want to do.

We watched incarcerated workers as they worked on a meditation/water garden that will be available for UDC

employees to go to for mental decompression, relaxation and rejuvenation.

The Sanctuary. We had the amazing experience of going into a small greenhouse called The Sanctuary that has a water feature (small waterfall and stream and pond) filled with tropical plants and a variety of small birds. The birds were curious and would come eat out of Roni's hand if we stayed really still. It provides nature-based therapy, with a waterfall, benches, and greenery for those who live and work there. Barszcz explained that he has a dream of creating spaces that people have access to that is a nature-based therapy, but also educational.

An Example of the Partnership with Utah Division of Wildlife Resources (DWR). In May, the UDC Horticulture program delivered approximately 17,000 sagebrush seedlings that for which DWR and Utah's Watershed Restoration Initiative contracted for them. The 24 employees of the program grew these seedlings to be planted on wildlife management areas in southern and central Utah. There was a Facebook post on the UDC and the DWR Facebook pages about it showing

the 17,000 seedlings wrapped in protective mesh to help stop the wildlife from browsing on the sagebrush plants until they get bigger and established in their new landscapes.

There are plans in this partnership to grow roughly 100,000 sagebrush for future use by DWR. The plants they grow also benefit deer and other wildlife across the state. They currently have plans to begin seeding roughly 100,000 sagebrush plants for future Wildlife and Waterfowl Management Area projects this year. As UDC says, this partnership is what we call a "win-win!"

UPAN extends appreciation to Utah DWR for having the willingness to engage UDC in this important project. Advocates are very impressed with the benefits of the Horticulture program and the partnerships, from all sides. We are thrilled that they are cultivating seedlings and indigenous plants for restoration of various areas to natural habitat throughout the state of Utah.

This program benefits everyone, including the citizens of Utah, the wildlife of Utah, and it should save taxpayer funds in the long run. So many positives come out of this for everyone and everything involved!

"Learning and innovation go hand in hand." William Pollard

"Let there be an opening into the quiet that lies beneath the chaos, where you find the peace you did not think possible and see what shimmers within the storm." Jon O'Donohue

1st Optometry Clinic Held at USCF on May 22, 2025

By Molly Prince, LCSW

UPAN has advocated with Correctional Health Services (CHS) for access to eye care in Utah's Prison System for the past year or more.

For various reasons, despite UDC CHS having put out nationwide recruitments for an Optometrist over the past year, USCF still does not have an on-site optometrist. This has left dozens of incarcerated individuals who need eye exams and new prescriptions for eyeglasses waiting.

Dr. Marcus Wisner has spearheaded negotiations between CHS and UDC with schools of optometry to create an Optometry Clinic. The initial, joint partnership,

Optometry Clinic with UDC, CHS and Rocky Mountain University School of Optometry was held on May 22, 2025. Over 45 patients were seen.

Rocky Mountain University is located in Provo, Utah.

It is reported that CHS will continue to hold these clinics and hopes to see more patients as the school and UDC get accustomed to the flow and requirements.

Patients will be scheduled based on the oldest health care request and urgency first. So put in your health care requests for eye care now in order to be put on the list for the next clinic!

"My father taught me not to overthink things, that nothing will ever be perfect, so just keep moving and do your best..." Scott Eastwood (Clint Eastwood's son)

2025 Legislative Session Recap Part 2 (Part 1 in May issue) – Criminal Fines, Restitution, and Other Financial Obligations

Summarized by Faye Jenkins

Listed below are several bills specific to the criminal justice system that may be of interest to those who are incarcerated and their friends and families. Links to all of the bills that were passed by Utah's legislature in 2025 can be found at <https://le.utah.gov/asp/passedbills/passedbills.asp>.

Bills relating to criminal fines, restitution, and other financial obligations.

HB154S1: This bill modifies provisions of the Victim Services Restricted Account and requires, after a set date, that the state's portion of punitive damage

payments, that are received in certain driving under the influence cases, are deposited into the Victims Services Restricted Account.

HB224S2: This bill concerns inmate and former inmate reentry, finances, and debts.

- Requires a county jail to notify certain state agencies that may have information concerning an inmate's existing debts when an inmate is incarcerated in the county jail for more than 90 days and when the inmate is released from the county jail.
- Requires the Office of State Debt Collection to suspend the accrual of interest on certain accounts receivable during periods of at least 90 days of incarceration and for an additional period after release.
- Expands the duties of the reentry division created by the Department of Corrections.
- Requires the department to provide information to an inmate on a regular basis concerning:
 - incentives for paying the inmate's known debts;
 - certain debts while incarcerated; and
 - information on how to access additional information concerning debts and resources on financial literacy and money management.
- Requires the department:
 - to notify certain state agencies that may have information concerning an inmate's existing debts when an inmate enters and leaves incarceration; and
 - to provide educational resources to individuals designated by an inmate concerning incentives for repaying certain debts while incarcerated.
- Amends provisions concerning when incarceration may not be considered by the Office of Recovery Services as voluntary unemployment for purposes of a child support order.
- Requires the office to suspend child support orders and money judgments in certain circumstances relating to incarceration.
- Provides that the office shall resume a suspended child support obligation after the individual has been released for 90 days.

HB383: This bill permits a judge to order that the cost of any court-ordered treatment or course be credited

toward the payment of criminal fines if the treatment or course is completed. It also permits credit for the cost of a court-ordered treatment or course to be issued by means of a judge's order on a petition for remittance.

HB562: This bill addresses the payment of restitutions and the unpaid balance of defendants' criminal accounts.

- Provides that the Office of State Debt Collection has the authority to collect civil accounts receivable or a civil judgment of restitution and interest thereon.
- Provides that administrative garnishments also apply to a debtor's property or wages that are under control of a third party.
- Requires the Office of State Debt Collection to provide an accounting of the unpaid balance of a defendant's criminal accounts receivable at the time of termination of the defendant's sentence.
- Provides repayment procedures for an unpaid balance of a defendant's criminal accounts receivable upon termination of a sentence.
- Provides circumstances that constitute a material change in circumstances.
- Adds a financial condition schedule to aid a court in determining the amount of a fixed financial condition.
- Provides for required procedures when a no bail hold is requested.
- Provides that certain Board of Pardons and Parole (BOPP) decisions on restitution are final and not subject to judicial review.
- Codifies order of restitution procedures that apply to certain individuals sentenced before July 1, 2021.
- Provides procedures for accounting and payment of restitution owed to various state governmental entities.
- Permits a sentencing court to authorize the deposit of funds in certain interest-bearing accounts when distribution to a victim is pending.
- Permits the BOPP to order recovery of fees incurred on behalf of a sentenced individual in addition to the existing ability to recover costs.

"If you stay silent about a problem to keep the peace, there is 0 % chance the problem gets fixed." Kalen Dion

"Dad, your guiding hand on my shoulder will remain with me forever."

For readers who look at this page first: Be sure you read Dr. Sam's article on College Ed. Pgs. 4-5 Great!!

Couple of Smiles and Maybe a Laugh (while you're laughing, consider a UPAN Donation as payback) Thanx, Ed

Question of the month: Do vegetarians (aka Vegans) eat animal crackers? ~ What do all the incarcerated animals say when they're frustrated? This place is a zoo! ~ What do cows write in? Their dairy diary ~ What did the father bison say to his son when his son left the ranch? Bi-son ~ Where's the best place to save your "Dad" memories? In a dadda-base.

A father is looked up to no matter how tall his child grows. Fathers possess and reveal wisdom. That's cool. Ed

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"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.