



September 21, 2009

Prison gardeners growing for neighbors

By *JESSICA CUFFMAN*
The Marion Star

MARION — Thousands of pounds of fresh vegetables are donated to area organizations that make meals for battered women, the elderly and disabled and the homeless.

The veggies are grown by unlikely gardeners - prisoners at North Central Correctional Institution.

The horticulture and turf management program coordinator, Kris Guthrie, loads up a van with the fresh goods, including green beans, watermelons, sweet corn, zucchini, onions and squash, each Monday during the growing season and delivers them to organizations that need them.

Inmates harvest them the first day of the work week so Guthrie can get going. Usually, they're never sure where the fruits of their labor end up or who they help out. Weeks of work of planning, planting, tending and repeating the process allow those most in need in the community to have extra nutritional, special touches to their daily meals.

Charity organizers say none of it goes to waste.

Inmates in the horticulture program got to hear firsthand recently how cooks used their vegetables and what they mean to the people who eat them.

Growers and users converged at the Community Service Garden Appreciation Day. A few dozen inmates attended, gave charity organizers tours of the greenhouse and gardens and shared their stories.

One of the most memorable deliveries this year was a stop at Mobile Meals, which delivers two meals a day to clients, for a total of about 2,300 a month.

Connie Cornwell, one of the meal organizers, said the 80 pounds of green beans Guthrie brought that day were a godsend.

"We used everything that they gave us. There was zucchini and summer squash, too," she said.

She and Dee Mackel were ready to leave to buy more vegetables when Guthrie showed up with her van.

"The program really helps us keep our costs down," she said. "There's nothing like vegetables from the garden to the table."

A smattering of onions - purple, yellow, red and white - were a highlight another day.

"We never get them," Cornwell said, and it might seem small, but clients let them know when something makes them happy.

"And they say a red onion just really adds to and dresses up a salad," Mackel said.

Tracy Gullet, an administrator at the Marion Shelter Program, said the vegetables from the garden truly benefit her organization.

"This is where they get so much fresh produce," she said. "Other than that, we don't get very much. It's something different and we can use it so many ways."

The donation of fresh produce is unique.

"Nobody else donates anything like that, and we truly love it. At the food bank, we get a lot of the same old same old."

Representatives from Turning Point and Salvation Army also spoke to inmates and shared similar stories.

One inmate, who is a landscape apprentice, told charity organizers what the horticulture and turf management program means to the prisoners.

"We love being out there in that garden feeling free," said Mahdi El-Amin Belton. "And we understand that to change tomorrow, we have to start today."

"I'm from the city, and I've never gardened before," he said.

Incarcerated since 1990, his former name was Eddie Belton. His first parole hearing is in 2019, and he said he works in the program to be prepared for release.

"When you leave here, you get hired," he said, noting the tough requirements of the program, including testing for various certifications.

Another inmate, Darrin Phillips, 41 and incarcerated since 1996, said it's as much about succeeding on the outside as it is about breaking up time on the inside.

"It's a way of being able to get away, and this is a way to give back," he said.

Don Bright, 51, and a horticulture apprentice, agreed.

He said giving back was his favorite part of the program. The next best thing was being away from the general prison population.

"A lot of inmates act like inmates," he said. "We try to act like regular guys."

The program continues throughout the year, with classroom and planning being the priority during cold weather. Inmates harvest crops from June through October, Guthrie said.

So far this year, more than 2,150 pounds of produce have gone out into the community. In the past five years, more than 9,200 pounds have been used at area agencies.

To plan the crops from year-to-year, they take feedback from the local charities.

"We ask what they could use and figure out how to grow it," Guthrie said.

One inmate, who has completed the landscape portion of the program and is an apprentice in the horticulture section, researches ways to produce higher yielding crops and care for them.

Bright, who has been incarcerated since 1995, is regarded as the expert student of the group. He can name every plant in the gardens - flowers, vegetables and trees. One of the ways he has contributed to improving the program is by implementing crop rotation and planting crops that attract good insects to keep harmful ones away.

Since the program's beginning in 2004, changes come with each season.

Guthrie searches for new ways to challenge the guys, said Deb Dye, school administrator for North

Central Correctional Institution. She acts as a kind of vice-principal for the educational programs at the prison, which include achieving GEDs, technical and apprenticeship certificates.

Since the start of the state's fiscal year in July, 566 inmates have participated in education programs. The total number of inmates usually falls between 2,300 and 2,400. In August alone, 488 inmates took classes of some sort.

A new opportunity for the horticulture program Guthrie organized is raising trees for the Ohio Department of Transportation. As a state budget cut, ODOT shut down its nursery and now buys seedlings for the prisoners to raise.

"It's a good opportunity for my guys to learn how to be an arborist," Guthrie said.

Inmates tend to 300 seedlings on the prison grounds at the northeast side of the compound.

While Marion Correctional Institution does not have a horticulture program, it plans to add one.

Community charities that provide meals will be happy to reap the benefits.

"We're always glad to see Kris," Cornwell said.

Reporter Jessica Cuffman: 740-375-5155 or jcuffman@marionstar.com

Just ask

Any organization in the community that believes it could benefit from vegetables or flowers grown in the North Central Correctional Institution horticulture program can call Kris Guthrie at 740-387-7040, ext. 2334.

Additional Facts

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Convict believes truth can win him freedom

Tyrone Noling sits in prison knowing his claims of innocence are worthless. But he believes the facts of the case are on his side, and some important lawyers are working to prove him right.

By Rick Armon
Beacon Journal staff writer

Published on Monday, Sep 21, 2009

YOUNGSTOWN: Tyrone Noling understands why people don't believe him.

He's an inmate on death row. The worst of the worst, convicted of shooting to death an elderly couple during a robbery nearly 20 years ago in Portage County.

His claims of innocence mean nothing.

But the facts of the case? Those mean everything to him. They keep him hopeful that one day he will walk free.

"I could say a million times, a billion times I'm innocent, but that's an old cliché," Noling said during a recent interview at the Ohio State Penitentiary. "I'm an inmate. An inmate's word is pretty much worthless. All I can say is the facts are there. The discrepancies are there.

"If you really look inside my case, I should not be here. There is something seriously wrong."

The Cincinnati-based Ohio Innocence Project and the Washington, D.C. law firm Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP are taking up his case, urging additional investigation.

The law firm recently published advertisements in the Ravenna Record-Courier offering a \$1,000 reward to the first person to provide information leading to his exoneration.

The firm has set up a toll-free number (866-995-3159) and an e-mail (nolingtips@weil.com) to accept tips.

The Ohio Innocence Project also is trying to have a cigarette butt found at the murder scene tested for DNA to see if it matches Noling's.

"The stories of a lot of the major players in the case and police explanations of the events and crime-scene analysis haven't borne out," said attorney Stephen Gibbons, whose law firm is working on Noling's behalf for free. "That's one of the reasons we tried to reach out to the people of Portage County.

"We think there are leads out there and there are people out there that haven't been spoken to or haven't been given the avenue to get out what they know about the case."

Convicted in 1996

Noling, now 37, has sat on Death Row since his conviction in 1996 for the murders of Bearnhardt and Cora Hartig at their Atwater Township home. The Hartigs, both 81, were shot multiple times in the chest April 5, 1990.

A neighbor discovered their bodies a few days later.

The couple, who didn't have children, had moved to Portage County from Copley Township to live in the country. Bearnhardt Hartig was a retired meat cutter at a grocery store.

The crime went unsolved at first.

Then, authorities put the teenage Noling, who had a lengthy rap sheet as a neighborhood thug, and his friends from Alliance at the home for the robbery. They had been busted before for robbing elderly victims, and Noling was in state prison at the time.

Noling's friends claimed he was the triggerman in the Hartig murders. But they later recanted, arguing that they were strong-armed into those confessions and had never been at the murder scene.

Since his conviction, Scene magazine and the Cleveland Plain Dealer published stories raising doubts about his involvement. Those doubts include his former friends saying they lied to authorities, evidence not being given to the defense and authorities not fully investigating a better suspect who owed the Hartigs money, according to the newspapers.

The other suspect has since died. The murder weapon never was found.

Multiple loses

Court after court, though, has rejected Noling's appeals.

County Prosecutor Vic Viglucci, who inherited the case from a previous prosecutor, noted that a jury found him guilty based on the evidence. Noling executed the Hartigs, he said.

He is unswayed by the law firm's and Ohio Innocence Project's efforts.

"That's nothing new in capital cases," he said. "Their object is to delay, delay and delay. It's all without merit.

"We'd like to see the sentence imposed carried out," he said. "It's a shame that these things are delayed for the number of years that they are."

Noling has always maintained his innocence.

Asked why he was convicted if the evidence wasn't there, Noling replied: "Overzealous prosecutor and politics. And an investigator who was hungry, for what reason, to solve a case. He was overzealous, as well. They wanted somebody for this case.

"This was highly publicized throughout the years. At points, they ran out of leads . . . they was desperate. People in Portage County wanted somebody to pay for this."

He sat with the Akron Beacon Journal earlier this month for a 20-minute interview at a small table in the visitation room at the prison. He was handcuffed and shackled, and prison officials and his lawyers sat in on the discussion.

Life in prison

He described his life on Death Row as a nightmare. He didn't open up when asked questions about his daily routine or who he stays in contact with besides his lawyers.

"I'm hoping through these tips and this new search that somebody will come forward," Noling said. "The people of Portage County have not forgotten about this crime.

"There's still a lot of conflict there. A sense of bringing somebody to justice. I'm hoping that somebody will come forward, whether they have talked to a deceased person or known something that somebody said to them that would help. That would actually save my life. That's the hope."

His lawyers believe evidence is out there.

They have received one recommendation about individuals identified in early police reports and are tracking down leads.

"The trail is cold already," attorney Ralph Miller said. "It is a cold case, but it's not hopeless.

"This was a terrible double murder. If an innocent man is put to death, this is a triple murder."

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Rapist returns to prison on child pornography charge

CantonRep.com staff report

Posted Sep 21, 2009 @ 02:14 PM

CANTON — A convicted sex offender is going back to prison for possessing child pornography.

Craig J. Hanslik, 40, of 1744 Shawnee Ave. SE in Massillon, pleaded guilty Monday to pandering obscenity involving a minor and two counts of pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor.

Stark County Common Pleas Judge Frank Forchione gave Hanslik a two-year prison term.

Hanslik was convicted of rape in Carroll County in 2001. At the time of his arrest in June, he was under state parole supervision, according to the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Web site.

He is subject to life-time sex offender registration because of the rape conviction.

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Killer should suffer just as his victim did

Tuesday, September 22, 2009 3:00 AM

I can solve the conundrum that is Romell Broom's "second" execution ("Second-try execution is 'cruel,' suit to say," *Dispatch* article, Friday).

Instead of putting him through the "trauma" of a week's reprieve, he should be granted the same fate as the 14-year-old victim he kidnapped, raped and stabbed. Then he can file a cruel-and-unusual-punishment lawsuit, against himself.

*DEBRA BERNDT
Powell*

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September 22, 2009

Prison program prepares inmates for re-entry

By *JESSICA CUFFMAN*
The Marion Star

MARION - It felt like a job fair, sounded like a job fair, and vendors were there to recruit clients to help them find jobs.

But most of the all-male population dressed in light blue T-shirts and dark blue pants, roaming from table to table, weren't going to applying for a job too soon.

They were Marion Correctional Institution inmates.

At Re-entry Day, all inmates are eligible to explore the options they have for seeking assistance when they're released.

As the fourth-annual event, more vendors than ever came to share with the prisoners what was available for them upon their release.

Mostly Lorain, Franklin and Cuyahoga County, vendors and prisoners participate in the event as a networking opportunity, said Kelly Donahue, re-entry coordinator.

She supervises re-entry on a day-to-day basis for offenders who become eligible for release.

She said having a successful transition back into their communities is essential to keep them from returning to the state prison system.

"There are a lot of agencies that are out there to help the guys," she said.

Streamlining the transition back into the home and workplace is important. The day is about getting ready.

"It's terrific for them and their families," Donahue said.

Sonya Nelson, executive director of The Firm of Columbus, came to Re-entry Day to give inmates her information.

"We're a one-stop shop," she said. "Several of our clients are ex-offenders. We identify gaps in their needs and provide resources and references to where they can get assistance."

Her table and others were swarmed with inmates collecting information for their eventual release.

A popular stop was The Ohio Benefits Bank mobile trailer. Trained counselors scheduled short sessions for inmates to find out about their eligibility for services - such as health insurance, food stamps, childcare, home energy assistance and eventually in filing income tax returns at the state and federal levels.

Mostly, the counselors were starting by providing quick checks for eligibility, which include income, number of family members in a household, and what rent and utility costs are, said Erin Sprouse, one counselor who was on site.

Up to 30 days before their release, inmates may meet with the Benefits Bank and enroll in programs.

Ohio inmate back on death row after execution try

Last Update: 9/21 1:02 pm

[COLUMBUS, Ohio](#) (AP) - A condemned killer who faces an unprecedented second attempt at lethal injection is at least temporarily back on death row in Ohio.

Defense attorney Tim Sweeney said Monday that inmate Romell Broom was moved back to death row at the Ohio State Penitentiary in Youngstown on Sunday.

U.S. District Judge Gregory Frost has suspended another attempt to put Broom to death and plans a hearing next week on requests for a further delay.

Gov. [Ted Strickland](#) stopped Broom's execution last Tuesday after about two hours when executioners failed to find a usable vein.

Broom wept at one point during the procedure and later complained of the needle painfully poking bone and muscle.

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2nd Chance: Convicted Rapist Back on Death Row Amid Lethal Injection Flop

Posted: Sep 22, 2009 6:55 AM EDT

Updated: Sep 22, 2009 6:55 AM EDT

Posted by Web Staff - [email](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)

LUCASVILLE, OH (WOIO) - Romell Broom will not be executed Tuesday after the execution effort failed last week.

Tuesday, Sept. 22nd was Broom's new execution date.

The execution team could not administer the lethal injection because they were unable to find a vein for two hours.

The Governor has put a temporary hold on the execution and has not released the new date yet. Broom is now back on death row.

53-year-old Broom was sentenced to death after convicted of raping a murdering 14-year-old Tryna Middleton in 1984.



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