

# Prisons make the best of holidays

By CAROLYN PLOTTS  
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Spending Christmas in prison can be lonely.

Even under normal circumstances, a person separated from their family and loved ones during the holiday season can feel isolated. Warden Jay Shelton at Norton Correctional Facility is keenly aware of the personal side of the 800 men under his charge at the Norton and Stockton locations.

Warden Shelton said Christmas is closely associated with children and family. He said men in prison miss their families and have a heightened sense of loneliness and isolation during this time. He said the prison staff is trained to look for signs of depression.

The warden said prison is a routine, "But, even during the holidays we still have to maintain the routine. We continue admitting new inmates, releasing inmates and transporting inmates."

Warden Shelton said one of the ways the facility tries to recognize

the Christmas season is to allow each inmate to have an additional \$50 in their financial account. They may spend it during the month right after Thanksgiving and before the new year. He said the security-level system in a prison is complicated and dictates how much money an individual inmate may have access to in a given time period. But, if an inmate has family or friends who will send extra money to his account, he can spend it in the prison's canteen.

He said during Christmas the canteen stocks additional seasonal items like candy canes and Christmas cookies.

Some men in prison are considered indigent. They have little to no money and no one on the "outside" to send them any. The only money they have is the minimal amount they receive each month from the State. The Norton Ministerial Alliance has tried to provide some Christmas cheer to these men. Warden Shelton said supplies like toiletries

and Christmas candy are bought with money from the Alliance. He said the administration staff arranges the supplies then forms an assembly line and fills gift bags for these men. By receiving these gifts, they know they're not forgotten.

Warden Shelton said the facility provides a traditional Christmas Dinner, prepared by Aramark Services, for inmates. He said if an inmate knows he is having visitors Christmas Day, he can make reservations and, for a minimal cost, they may have dinner together.

Christmas is essentially a Christian holiday. "But," Warden Shelton said, "There is a diverse range of religious faiths represented at Norton Correctional." He said some of the other religious celebrations coincide with the Christian calendar. He said it is understood that each man may practice (or not practice) their faith as they want.

He said, "As state representatives, we have to always be on

guard to accommodate the needs of all faiths." He said Chaplain Randall Medlock oversees and coordinates all volunteer activities and the weekly religious calendar.

Since men in prison cannot send presents to their children, there are volunteer-driven programs that provide Christmas presents to inmates children. The Salvation Army sponsors "Toy Lift" and Prison Fellowship Ministries sponsors "Angle Tree". There is no cost to the inmate for either program. All they have to do is register their children to receive a gift.

Sometimes, with administration approval, prison volunteers host a Christmas party and provide treats to the men who attend the classes they teach.

Warden Shelton said, "We are sensitive to the inmates's feelings, and know that the biggest thing to them is being separated from their family. However, justice must be served."

## A solemn watch...



An icy angel stands guard on the north side of Norton Trinity Episcopal Church. — Telegram photo by Carolyn Plotts

## Inmates share Christmas spirit

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They may be incarcerated, but they want to share what they have with needy families in the Norton area.

For the second year, men at Norton Correctional Facility who are enrolled in the Stop Violence program, have spearheaded a food drive to benefit God's Pantry.

Sharon Leiker civilian sponsor of Stop Violence in the minimum security unit said it is a voluntary program. Ms. Leiker said, "Being in the program requires a serious commitment on the inmate's part. Stop Violence is a wonderful program and the men in it are really trying. They want to become good role models for their children."

She added that the recidivism rate drops considerably if a man completes the program before he is released.

Inmates, staff and visitors were encouraged to bring non-perishable food items and personal hygiene products to be donated to the community food pantry. God's Pantry is an outreach program operated by volunteers from Norton Trinity Episcopal Church.

Monday afternoon, Sondra Petrie, Stop Violence Coordinator and Unit Team Manager at the facility, delivered several boxes of groceries to the pantry, located next door to the church. By spending their own money at the prison's canteen the men

purchased dozens of packages of ramen noodles, shampoos, soaps, crackers, sticks of salami, cookies and one canned ham.

God's Pantry volunteer Elaine Mann said, "Today we had an ingathering from a group of people some might consider "the least of these". But, it's the true spirit of Christmas when someone sacrifices to give to others. These men truly sacrificed because they have so little and yet, they wanted to share."

If you are interested in the Stop Violence program call the prison's chaplain, Randall Medlock at 877-3389.

To talk to Elaine Mann about God's Pantry, call 877-2019.

## DEATH NOTICE

Robert Hickman, Norton, died Monday night at Norton County Hospital.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

The Norton Telegram...  
News you need!

## Hay, grazing conference set for Jan. 16

The 2008 Kansas Hay and Grazing Conference is scheduled for Jan. 16 in Manhattan at the Kansas Farm Bureau building.

"This conference is for anyone interested in livestock grazing, hay production and utilization, and buying and selling of Kansas grass and hay products," said Gary Kilgore, one of the conference coordinators.

The event's keynote speaker, R.L. Dalrymple, a longtime forage management agronomist with the Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Okla., will discuss crabgrass as a forage and livestock grazing management tool. Dalrymple developed Red River and Quick-N-Big crabgrass varieties and was the principal researcher in

developing crabgrass production systems. He produces those varieties in his family seed business that markets in 25 states.

Other topics to be covered will include Financial and Transitional Planning; Hay Hauling and Trucking Regulations; Weed and Brush Control; Improved Alfalfa Traits; Annual Forages; Grazing Steers in the Flint Hills; and Using Distiller's By-Products on Grass.

Additional presentations will include Marketing Organic Hay; Forage Trends in Feedlot Rations; Efficiency in Feeding Hay; Liability in the Hay Business; Using Inoculates and Preservatives.

K-State Research and Extension and the Kansas Forage and Grassland Council are co-spon-

sors of the event.

The conference begins with registration from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. at the Kansas Farm Bureau building on the northwest side of Manhattan just off Seth Child Rd., at 2627 KFB Plaza. The registration fee is \$40 if paid by Jan. 11. It covers a 2008 membership in the Kansas Forage and Grassland Council, conference lunch and breaks, conference proceedings and a 2008 KFGC discount coupon book. Registrations received after Jan. 11 and at the door are \$60 per person.

Registration and other information is available by contacting Gary Kilgore (620) 431-1530 or Karen Walters at kwalters@oznet.ksu.edu.

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Second Norton Downtown Restoration Public Meeting Sponsored by the Norton Downtown Restoration Committee

Come to learn about what is already happening in downtown Norton, give input, and get involved in future projects!

**Tues., December 18, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.**

Above Mortensen's Computer Services at 101 South State St.  
Please use the east door—an elevator is available

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