

THE TEXAS JAIL ASSOCIATION KEY ISSUES

Vol XXX, No. 2

Summer 2026



Summer 2026 Edition

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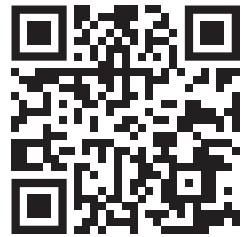
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Message from the President



A Profession Built on Pride, Service, and Dedication

The journey to leadership is never traveled alone. Behind every corrections professional stands a network of mentors, colleagues, family members, and supporters who help shape the path along the way. For those serving in county jails across Texas, that journey is built on dedication, sacrifice, and an unwavering commitment to public service. The Texas Jail Association plays an important role in that mission by bringing professionals together with a shared goal of strengthening our profession and better serving our communities.

Corrections is more than a career. It is a calling. It represents long hours, difficult decisions, accountability, and a willingness to serve even when the work often goes unnoticed. Many outside our profession may never fully understand the challenges correctional staff face each day, but those within the profession understand the responsibility, professionalism, and dedication required to perform this work with excellence. Equally important are the families who support corrections professionals. Their sacrifices and encouragement play a vital role in the success and resilience of those who serve.

As President, I am deeply honored by the trust and confidence the membership has placed in me, and I sincerely thank each of you for the opportunity to serve in this role. As our association continues to grow, we remain focused on expanding training opportunities, increasing membership involvement, and raising awareness of the critical role corrections professionals play in public safety.

One important initiative already underway is the formation of a Salary Analysis Committee designed to assist county jails across Texas. This committee hopes to provide salary comparison resources. Such resources could be used for budget workshops, fiscal planning discussions, recruitment efforts, increasing retention, and the overall continued advancement of our profession.

The work performed inside county jails directly impacts public safety, rehabilitation, and community stability across Texas, and every corrections professional contributes to that mission. In moving forward together, I encourage members to support our association in strengthening the profession and building opportunities for future leaders. Collectively, we will continue demonstrating the pride, integrity, and dedication defining corrections professionals across the State of Texas.

Past President's Message



Over 40 years ago, the Association's founder and first president, Jerry Baggs, had a vision for collaboration among Texas jails. He recognized the need to organize and bring together detention officers and jail administrators from county jails across the State of Texas. Since its founding on June 4, 1986, this organization has made tremendous strides and accomplishments. The founding members would be proud of the progress made in supporting the men and women who work in our jails, and we remain committed to continuing this important work.

Along the way, I have been fortunate to learn firsthand the importance of service to TJA and its members. The late Past President Brent Phillips took a chance on me and appointed me to his board, and I will always be grateful for that opportunity. Through this experience, I have built meaningful relationships and lasting friendships with board members and fellow members alike. It has been both a privilege and an honor to serve as your president over the past year.

This has been a fantastic year as we expanded regional training opportunities to better serve and connect with our membership across the state, while our podcasts continued to grow as a valuable resource for corrections professionals. I encourage everyone to keep liking and sharing them on social media as we continue building momentum together. None of this success would have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our outstanding board, whose commitment continues to strengthen this organization. I also hope our members continue taking full advantage of the training, networking, and camaraderie that make the Texas Jail Association so special.

I am extremely grateful to Sheriff Sally Hernandez and Jail Administrator Major Raul Bansasco for their continued support.

Congratulations to Rowdee Edwards on your appointment as president. I look forward to your term in office, and I know TJA will be in excellent hands under your leadership.

Regardless of the size of our jails, we all share one common truth: our jailers are the foundation and heart of the corrections system.

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Call for Articles!



Key Issues invites all members to send articles, photographs, presentations, papers, announcements, challenges, creative solutions or any submission that may be of interest to the TJA membership.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Fall Issue
October 1, 2026

Winter Issue
December 1, 2026

Summer Issue
June 1, 2027

SEND SUBMISSIONS OR INQUIRIES TO
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Building a Stronger Future for Corrections

TJA Creates Opportunities and Connections

by: Erica Hernandez, 2nd Vice President

When I think about what makes the corrections profession strong, I think about the people behind it. The officers, administrators, civilian staff, and support personnel who show up every day committed to serving their facilities and communities. That is exactly why I believe membership in the Texas Jail Association is so important.

The Texas Jail Association (TJA) has been supporting corrections professionals across Texas since 1986, and over the years it has become much more than just an organization. It is a network of professionals who understand the unique challenges of our profession and who are dedicated to helping each other grow through training, leadership, education, and collaboration.

One of the things I value most about TJA is the opportunity for continued learning. In corrections, things are constantly changing. From legislative updates and jail standards to leadership development and security concerns, staying informed is essential. TJA provides access to outstanding training opportunities throughout the year, including regional seminars and the annual training conference where members can earn TCOLE credit while learning from experienced professionals across the state.

TJA also creates opportunities to connect with other professionals who understand the

realities of working in our field. Some of the best ideas, solutions, and support come from conversations with others who face the same challenges we do every day. Those connections are invaluable and remind us that we are not alone in this profession.

Another important benefit of membership is staying informed on legislative updates and issues impacting jail operations in Texas. TJA serves as a strong voice for corrections professionals and helps ensure members have access to timely information that affects our facilities and our profession.

Membership opportunities are available for correctional staff, retired professionals, associate members, and businesses that support the mission of advancing professionalism in Texas detention services. Whether you are new to corrections or have years of experience, there is value in being part of an organization that is committed to supporting your professional growth and the future of our profession.

If you have ever considered becoming a member, I encourage you to take a closer look at what the Texas Jail Association has to offer. Investing in your professional development also strengthens the entire corrections community across Texas.

Together, we continue building stronger leadership, stronger facilities, and a stronger future for corrections in Texas.

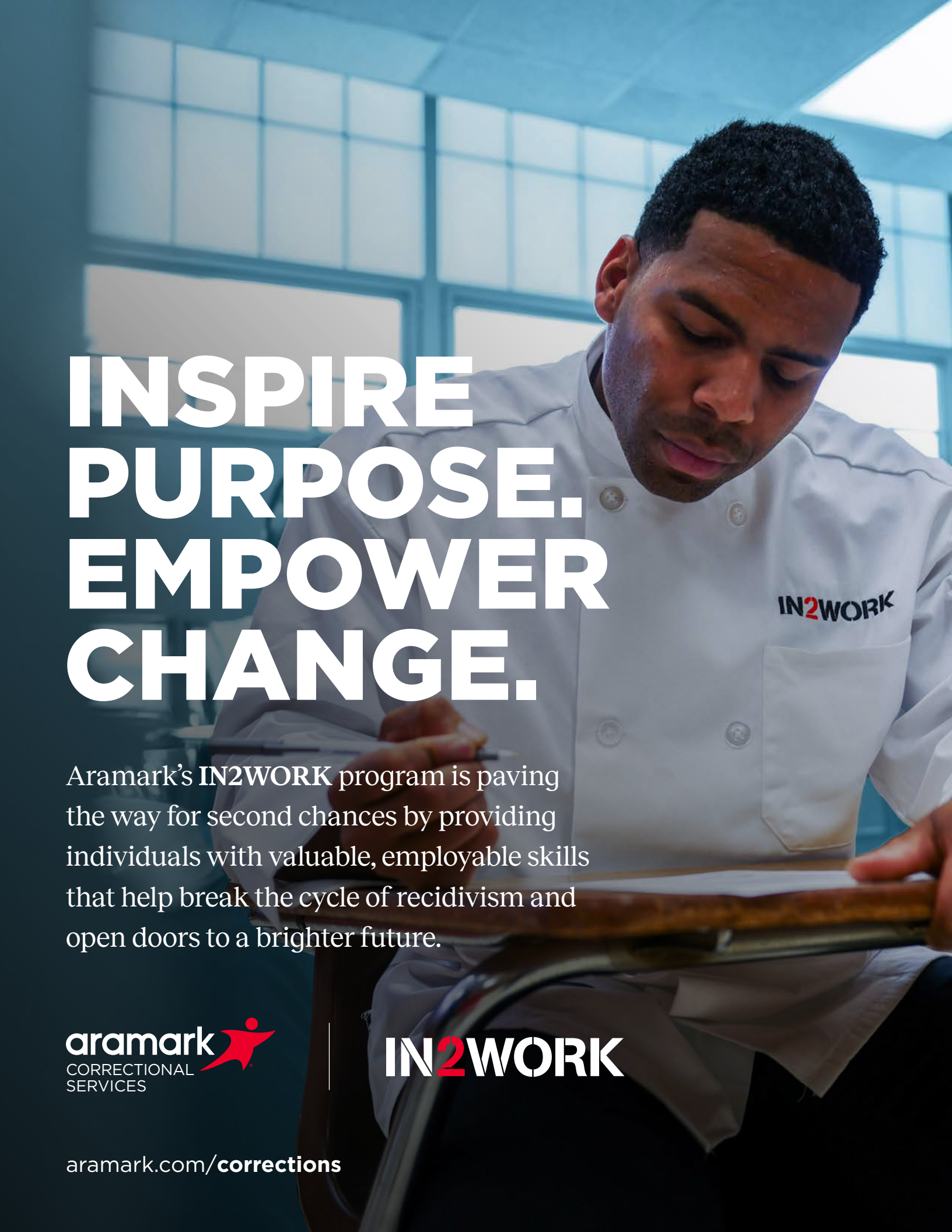
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Business – 55



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Blood drives save lives.

BY: TIM QUINTANA, SOUTHERN HEALTH PARTNERS AND TJA PAST PRESIDENT

The Texas Jail Association/Southern Health Partners Blood Drive was a tremendous success at the 40th Annual Conference in San Marcos, Texas. Thanks to the generosity of our members, more than 36 pints of blood were collected, placing our drive in the 99th percentile for allotted drive time.

The impact of this achievement was recognized personally by the Blood Drive Director through both a phone call and a handwritten letter expressing appreciation for the outstanding support shown by TJA members.

Once again, the members of the Texas Jail Association demonstrated their commitment to helping others and supporting our communities.

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Meet Wade Estes, CIS Texas Representative

The Culture We Create: How Organizational Psychology Shapes Correctional Behavior

by: Marcy Calnan, J.D., M.Ed.

Every jail has a culture.

You can feel it almost immediately when walking through a facility. It appears in how supervisors speak to staff, how officers communicate with inmates, whether employees feel comfortable asking questions, and how mistakes are handled when things go wrong. Culture reveals itself in tone, behavior, expectations, and silence long before anyone references a policy manual.

Most correctional professionals have heard phrases like:

"Just get through the shift."

"Stay in your lane."

"We take care of our own."

"Don't make this bigger than it is."

These statements may seem insignificant in isolation, but together they communicate something powerful: the unwritten rules of the organization. They teach staff what is rewarded, what is discouraged, and what "survival" looks like inside the facility. Written policies only establish formal expectations, but culture determines operational reality.

That distinction matters because culture influences nearly every major issue facing corrections today: retention, morale, burnout, force decisions, reporting practices, communication failures, staff wellness, and liability exposure.

Long before a crisis becomes an investigation, lawsuit, resignation, or headline, there is a cultural undercurrent swirling beneath it. The challenge for corrections leaders is recognizing that culture is not accidental. It is created daily through leadership, reinforcement, communication, and organizational behavior.

How Culture Is Built

Many correctional professionals will tell you they truly learned the job during their first few weeks inside a facility, not during the academy.

New staff quickly begin observing the realities of the workplace. They notice which supervisors are respected, which officers are trusted, how veteran officers handle conflict, what behaviors are ignored, and which mistakes receive immediate attention. In many ways, the policy manual introduces the job, but the culture teaches people how to survive it.

Culture develops through repeated patterns:

- **Leadership modeling.**
- **Peer influence.**
- **Informal rules.**
- **Storytelling.**
- **Discipline practices.**
- **Recognition patterns.**

Officers learn from watching one another. They absorb expectations through observation and repetition. Veteran staff use storytelling to pass down survival strategies, coping mechanisms, communication styles, and attitudes about inmates, leadership, and the profession itself. This process is not always intentional. Sometimes organizations unintentionally reward the very behaviors they later struggle to correct. Staff quickly learn whether honesty is valued more than appearance, whether supervisors encourage honest communication or discourage it, and whether professionalism is consistently modeled across ranks.

One of the most revealing questions a leader can ask is:

“What would a new officer learn about our culture during their first thirty days here that is never written down anywhere?”

The answer often reveals far more than policy itself.

When Survival Traits Become Organizational Risks

Correctional culture develops around traits that are often necessary for survival in high-stress environments. Many of these characteristics serve important operational purposes and help officers safely navigate challenging work. Problems arise when those traits become distorted, excessive, or normalized without transparent accountability.

Loyalty

Loyalty is essential in corrections. Officers depend on one another during emergencies, disturbances, medical crises, and unpredictable situations. Strong team cohesion builds trust and creates reliability under pressure.

However, loyalty becomes dangerous when it discourages accountability. Organizations

encounter risk when loyalty shifts from supporting coworkers to protecting misconduct, minimizing concerns, or discouraging honest reporting. Staff may fear being viewed as disloyal for speaking up, even when intervention is necessary.

Healthy cultures teach employees that professionalism and accountability are forms of loyalty—not betrayals of it.

Toughness

Emotional control is another critical survival trait in corrections. Officers must remain calm during conflict, make decisions under pressure, and maintain authority in difficult situations. Resilience matters in environments where stress and trauma are common. However, toughness can also become unhealthy when staff feel pressure to suppress emotion, ignore stress injuries, or avoid asking for help. In many facilities, emotional exhaustion becomes normalized. Seeking support can be interpreted as weakness rather than professionalism. Over time, unresolved stress can contribute to burnout, cynicism, detachment, and strained personal relationships beyond the workplace.

The same mindset which helps staff survive critical incidents can also isolate them from the support systems needed to remain healthy over the course of a career.

Suspicion

Hypervigilance keeps correctional officers safe. Threat awareness, pattern recognition, and skepticism toward manipulation are necessary in custodial environments. Yet chronic suspicion can eventually alter how staff view everyone around them. When suspicion becomes excessive, officers may begin dismissing legitimate medical complaints, overreacting to behavior, or hardening themselves from everyone, inmates, coworkers, friends, and family. Over time, constant vigilance becomes cynicism.

The goal is not eliminating suspicion, but rather preventing one's situational awareness from turning into one becoming isolated and dehumanizing.

Survival Identity

Corrections work often creates a powerful shared identity among staff. Employees develop pride in the profession, emotional endurance, and strong bonds with others who understand the realities and pressures of the work. Staff learn to rely on one another in unpredictable and high-stress environments, and over time, resilience, skepticism, emotional control, and loyalty can become deeply embedded cultural traits within the organization. These characteristics are not inherently negative, in many cases, they are necessary for safety, stability, and survival in correctional settings.

Challenges emerge, however, when survival-based thinking evolves into the dominant organizational identity without reflection or balance. Agencies may begin to view outside perspectives, oversight, or reform efforts as automatic threats rather than opportunities for discussion or improvement. An “us versus them” mentality can take hold, making collaboration, innovation, and transparency more difficult. Individually, staff may struggle to separate their professional identity from chronic stress, hypervigilance, or emotional suppression, increasing the risk of burnout, cynicism, isolation, and reluctance to seek support. At the organizational level, these dynamics can weaken morale, discourage healthy communication, normalize unhealthy coping behaviors, increase turnover, and erode trust both inside the agency and with the public it serves.

Leadership Either Shapes Culture or Surrenders to It

Culture does not sustain itself by accident. It is reinforced every day through leadership behavior. Staff pay close attention to what su-

pervisors tolerate, what they correct, and what they praise. Over time, these repeated signals become operational standards.

If leadership ignores poor communication, inconsistent accountability, or unprofessional conduct, those behaviors eventually become normalized. Likewise, when leaders consistently recognize professionalism, de-escalation, teamwork, and honesty, staff begin to understand that those behaviors matter. One of the most overlooked concepts in corrections leadership is psychological safety, primarily focused on the belief that employees can speak honestly without fear of humiliation or retaliation. Facilities with strong psychological safety are often better at identifying problems early because staff feel safer communicating concerns before they become crises.

This does not mean abandoning accountability or weakening the chain of command. Effective leaders can maintain high standards while still encouraging professionalism, communication, and trust. Correctional staff do not simply learn policy. They learn patterns.

And patterns are shaped by leadership.

Culture strengthens when leaders:

- **Correct fairly and consistently.**
- **Document honestly.**
- **Own mistakes openly.**
- **Recognize positive performance.**
- **Coach instead of humiliate.**
- **Communicate expectations clearly.**

Culture Is an Operational Issue

Organizational culture is sometimes treated as a “soft” issue separate from operational

performance. In reality, culture influences measurable outcomes throughout a facility. High turnover, excessive sick leave, burnout, workers' compensation claims, force incidents, recruitment difficulties, morale problems, and early retirements are often discussed independently. But together, they may reveal deeper organizational stress within the culture itself.

Leaders should pay attention not only to major incidents, but also to recurring friction points inside the organization: inconsistent supervision, poor communication, avoidable scheduling stress, broken equipment, uneven discipline, and lack of recovery time after critical incidents. Small operational frustrations accumulate over time. In high-stress environments, unresolved friction contributes to fatigue, irritability, disengagement, and mistakes. Strong cultures intentionally reduce unnecessary stressors whenever possible.

Healthy facilities also create opportunities for learning rather than only discipline. Near-miss incidents as instructional strategies, after-action reviews for both positive and negative incidents, and open discussions about what worked and what failed can strengthen communication and improve performance without assigning blame. Let those on the line speak first, mid-level management next, and leaders last. Leaders need the information to lead well!

Effective organizations recognize and reinforce the behaviors they want repeated.

- **Good de-escalation.**
- **Professional restraint.**
- **Honest reporting.**
- **Open discussion.**
- **Active listening.**
- **Growth mindset.**
- **Early intervention.**
- **Team support.**

Too often, organizations only notice employees when something goes wrong. Over time, that shapes culture too. Every interaction inside a facility teaches staff what matters. Leaders shape culture through what they repeat, reinforce, ignore, and reward. The culture we create today ultimately influences how people respond tomorrow during stress, conflict, crisis, and accountability. And in corrections, that matters more than we sometimes realize.

"Policy tells staff what to do, but culture tells staff what really happens."



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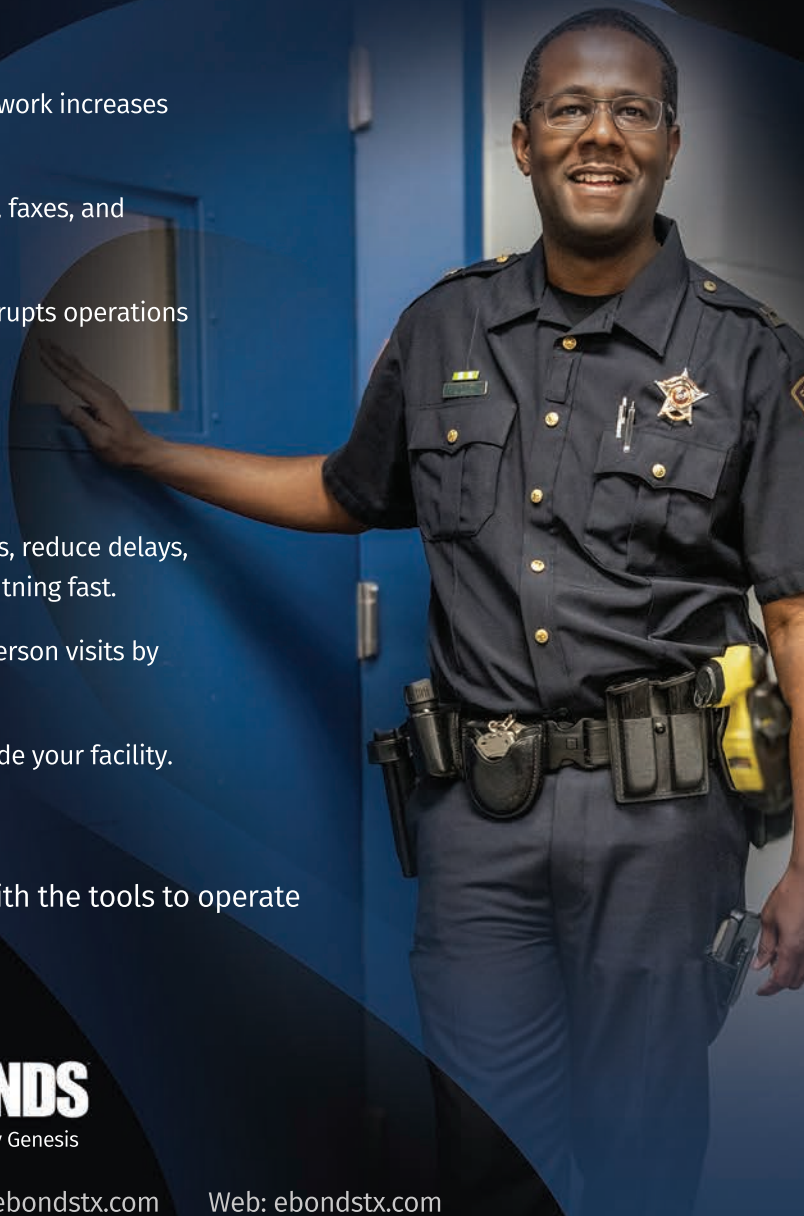
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The History

Behind Corrections Officer Week

by: Martin Gonzales, TJA Past President

This writing will have more of a personal take to it than others.

Just because the topic of Corrections Officer Week is near and dear to my heart. For those that don't know, I worked at the Atascosa County Jail in Jourdanton for 21 years and 5 months. I worked as a floor jailer from 1999 until 2005, when I was promoted to Sergeant. In 2009, I was again promoted to Lieutenant and in 2013, I was moved to Captain as the Jail Administrator. I remained in this role until December of 2020 when I left. So, I was able to experience the jail at every level through different moments of technological eras.

President Ronald Reagan established the recognition for Corrections Officer Week in 1984. The administration saw a need to recognize the behind-the-scenes individuals that dealt with the incarcerated throughout the nation in prisons, jails, detention facilities, etc. Each year, corrections officers are recognized during the first week in May. This year, it was celebrated from May 3 through May 9.

This writing was summoned by a memory to a recent location. You see, my job with NCIC allows me to visit spectacular places as an exhibitor. That is what I have done since I left the jail in 2020. In April, my job landed me on South Padre Island, Texas for a conference at La Isla Grand Hotel and Conference Center. I hadn't been to this place since 2007. I thought that I was going to walk into a place that had been transformed beyond recognition from 19 years

ago. This place hadn't changed much. I could remember everything exactly like it was.

The special part of this place is what this location meant for me. This place was the setting for the first time I had ever attended a jail conference in 2005. I hadn't traveled much in my life and now I was going to South Padre Island to jail training. On top of that, I was traveling with Bryan Crouch and Sheriff Tommy Williams.

In my life, I have had lots of people who have confidence in me. All I've ever asked for was a chance and that's what I got. At this first conference, I watched as the conference hosts, the Texas Jail Association Board Members worked. They were the rock stars of the jail profession. They had a personality that oozed charisma and jail know-how.

Bryan Crouch gave me the rundown on why it was important to be here. He said that to be good, you have to get out of the county and talk with other people who do what you do. Listen to their stories and compare notes. Most importantly, make friends because they may need you one day and you may need them. Bryan emphasized that this had been valuable in his success. So I took his advice, slowly and throughout the years, I developed friendships and camaraderie throughout the state.

Fast forward to 2013. I ran an election campaign to join the Texas Jail Association Board of Directors. I was unsuccessful but I didn't give up. In 2018, after over 5 years on the TJA Board, I

became the President of the organization. My mission was simple; call on the board and me to solve the problems throughout jails in Texas, no matter the size or distance, technology was on our side. I was determined to have jail personnel be recognized as a profession, as it should be.

So, yes, corrections is dear to me. The jailers throughout Texas serve somewhere between gatekeepers, babysitters, referees and counselors. The field of corrections has come a long way as far as professionalism and advanced training. However, the professionals in the jail have to endure being attacked, having feces and

urine tossed at them, subduing the mentally ill, dealing with the worst society has to offer. This is just what I'm describing for you. Now, imagine it and tell me that these men and women don't deserve a week of recognition.

Although I am no longer in the business as a jailer, I still have it in me to fight for this profession, to stand as an equal to our counterparts in the business. Corrections professionals deserve the same respect, recognition, and support for the vital role they serve within the criminal justice system.

Thank you for all that you do!

JERRY BAGGS GOLF TOURNAMENT

by: Edwardo Jackson, TJA Past President

This year's Jerry Baggs Golf Tournament at Kissing Tree Golf Club was a tremendous success, drawing a record turnout of 112 players. Thanks to all of the players and sponsors, we raised \$15,394.36 for the Jerry Baggs Scholarship Fund.

A special thank you goes out to our sponsors: Keefe Group, Fechheimer, Brinkley Sargent Wiginton Architects, Summit Food Service, Securus Technologies, CML Security, H-E-B, Sterling Commissary, and Crown Correctional Telephone. We truly appreciate their support in helping make this event possible.

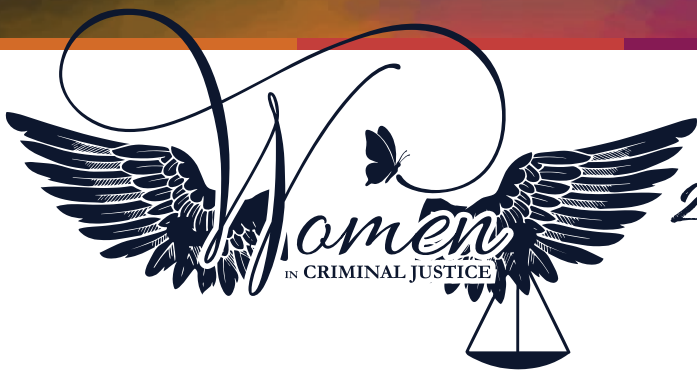
The annual golf tournament plays an important role in funding the Jerry Baggs Memorial Scholarship, which assists qualifying TJA members in attending the National Jail Leadership Command Academy (NJLCA). The academy is

hosted by the Correctional Management Institute of Texas at Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, and is a joint effort between CMIT and the American Jail Association.

With record participation and fundraising this year, we are already looking forward to another outstanding tournament in Frisco during the 41st Annual TJA Conference in 2027.

Pictured below are the first place winners of this year's tournament: Johnny Jaquess, Will Douglas, Dustin Douglas, and Chris Ware.





2026 Women in Criminal Justice GALVESTON, TX / FEBRUARY 9-12, 2026

by: Frances Dembowski, TJA Past President

The Women in Criminal Justice Conference is hosted by the Correctional Management Institute of Texas (CMIT), which provides training for professionals working in both adult and juvenile corrections in community and institutional settings. CMIT is recognized for offering practical, high-quality training on issues relevant to today's criminal justice professionals.

This year's conference was held in Galveston and featured training sessions on leadership, stress management, generational differences in the workplace, emotional contraband, overcoming adversity, and jail operations. Attendees also heard from respected leaders in the field, including retired District Attorney Mark

Yarborough, who presented "Suffer from Burn-out"; Texas Ranger Major Wende Wakeman, who presented "Credibility Counts"; and Prosecutor Jo Ann Linzer, who presented "The Power Within: Women Leading Change in Criminal Justice."

The conference provided women in corrections, law enforcement, and probation an opportunity to network, share experiences, and discuss strategies that have been successful within their agencies and professional roles. Many attendees left with valuable professional connections and renewed encouragement in their careers. The Travis County Sheriff's Office also had a group in attendance.



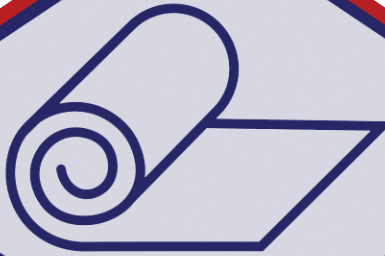


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Women in Corrections

by: Frances Dembowski, TJA Past President

Women in Corrections was founded in 2021 by Serina Greene and Misty Diaz, Jail Administrator for Lamb County, to create a supportive space for women working in the criminal justice profession across Texas. The group encourages women in corrections to build professional relationships, strengthen networking opportunities, and support one another both personally and professionally.

Serina hosted the Women in Corrections Happy Hour during this year's annual conference, where all women attending the conference were invited to participate. Attendees had the opportunity to connect with one another while enjoying a fun, modified version of bingo. Door prizes were distributed throughout the event, and participants were encouraged to network and build lasting professional connections.

Women from all areas of corrections attended the event, including corrections officers, sergeants, lieutenants, and jail administrators. Professionals with experience in booking, training, classification, transport, housing operations, plus standards and compliance were also represented. Sheriff Sally Hernandez attended the event as well and shared career experiences, encouragement, and professional insight with attendees.

TJA is grateful to Serina Greene for her leadership, generosity, and continued commitment to supporting women in corrections. Her dedication and encouragement continue to make a meaningful impact on the organization and the professionals it serves.

"Women are changemakers in every position they work and serve in. Let's encourage and build up others!" — Serina Greene



Women In Corrections Happy Hour

**Hosted by
Serina Green of Sustainable Security Solutions**

At the 40th Annual Texas Jail Conference, the Women in Corrections Happy Hour was a huge success. Hosted by Serina Green of Sustainable Security Solutions, served as a distinguished gathering for women in the correctional field across the state of Texas. The event

fostered meaningful connections in an atmosphere of networking and professionalism, complemented by delicious food and gracious hospitality. The Texas Jail Association extends our sincere gratitude to Serina Green for hosting such an extraordinary and impactful event.



TECHNOLOGY REPORT

by: Lt. Justin Marinari, Technology Committee Chair

Since the last issue of Key Issues, the Technology Committee has continued working to promote the corrections profession and keep TJA members connected through our social media platforms, website, app, and podcast.

One of our biggest focuses has been expanding the reach of our awareness videos. Through targeted boosting and sharing, these videos have generated hundreds of thousands of views and reached thousands of people across the country. The goal of these videos is to educate the public about the important work being done in our jails every day while helping support recruitment efforts throughout Texas.

Topics featured in our awareness campaign include recruiting, officer mental health, working with inmates who have mental health needs, the dangers of corrections, inmate programs, the role of sheriffs in jail operations, volunteers in corrections, and stories highlighting life-saving actions performed by correctional staff. If you haven't watched them yet, I encourage you to check them out and share them on your own social media pages. Every share helps spread awareness about our profession and the positive impact correctional professionals have on their communities.

To help keep our social media accounts active year-round, we've also started posting shorter content snippets and highlights to provide at least one new post each week. Our goal is to keep members engaged while continuing to showcase the great work being done in corrections across Texas.

JailTalk, TJA's official podcast, continues to

grow. Since our last report, we've released episodes covering mental training, trauma-informed corrections, compliance, and the benefits and challenges unique to small jails. Going forward, listeners can expect a new JailTalk episode on the first Monday of every month. Upcoming topics include Staff Mental Health and Resilience, the history of the Texas Jail Association, and agency spotlight episodes featuring agencies from across the state.

The Technology Committee also supported the 40th Annual Conference through the TJA app by providing live updates and information throughout the event. The interactive vendor game was once again a fun way for attendees to engage with our exhibitors. Thank you to everyone who participated, and a special thank you to our sponsors and vendors for helping make the activity a success.

The TJA app continues to be a valuable resource for members. As a reminder, conference attendees can access the attendee list through the app using the password `tja2026`. The app also includes access to TJA merchandise, conference information, notifications, and links to all our social media platforms.

Don't forget that all our awareness videos, JailTalk episodes, and social media accounts can be found through the TJA website and app. We encourage all members to follow our social media pages, subscribe to JailTalk, watch and share our videos, and download the TJA app to stay informed throughout the year.

Looking ahead, we plan to continue creating awareness videos and expanding the JailT-

alk podcast with new monthly episodes. Our overall goal remains the same: supporting the detention profession by increasing awareness, highlighting the outstanding work being done in our facilities, and keeping our members informed and connected.

As always, we welcome your feedback and ideas. If there are topics you'd like to see covered in future videos or podcasts, please let us know.

JAIL TALK

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TEXAS JAIL ASSOCIATION REGIONAL TRAINING

Investing in Ourselves: The Power of Regional Training

by: **Abigail McClish, 1st Vice President, Texas Jail Association**

As your 1st Vice President and a proud member of the Texas Jail Association Board of Directors, I've had the privilege of seeing firsthand how impactful our regional trainings have become. Since May 2025, TJA has hosted 20 regional trainings across four regions of Texas, totaling 144 hours of professional development opportunities for jail professionals throughout our state.

That means hundreds of jail staff members have received valuable instruction focused

on leadership, inmate management, liability reduction, wellness, compliance, communication, and operational excellence. Every training hour represents an investment in our profession and in the safety and success of our facilities.

When we talk about the mission of TJA, it's not just words on paper. It's about bringing together professionals who care deeply about the operation of Texas county jails. It's about sharing knowledge, strengthening leader-

ship, and building each other up so every jail in Texas can operate with excellence. Training remains one of the most powerful ways we accomplish that mission.

Learning Together, Growing Together

One of the most valuable aspects of regional training is the networking and camaraderie that naturally develop throughout these events. These trainings allow jail professionals from neighboring counties to connect with others facing many of the same challenges: staffing shortages, inmate management issues, evolving standards, recruitment and retention concerns, and the day-to-day operational demands that come with working in corrections.

Those hallway conversations, lunch discussions, and shared experiences often become lasting professional relationships and resources long after the training ends. It is encouraging to hear how others have addressed similar challenges and reassuring to know we are not alone in the work we do. Regional trainings help strengthen not only individual agencies, but the entire jail system across Texas.

Celebrating an Outstanding 40th Annual TJA Conference

In addition to the success of our regional training platform, the May 2026 40th Annual Texas Jail Association Conference in San Marcos showcased some of the best training and professional development opportunities our association has offered to date. The conference agenda featured an exceptional lineup of keynote speakers, breakout sessions, and leadership development opportunities for jail professionals at every level.

Topics ranged from emotional intelligence, trauma-informed culture change, and peer support to tactical trauma care, jail compli-

ance teams, corrections liability management, report writing, gang identification, and suicide prevention. The diversity and quality of instruction provided attendees with meaningful and practical tools they can immediately take back to their agencies.

The conference also highlighted the incredible talent and expertise that exists within our profession. Many of the instructors who support our regional trainings also contributed their time and knowledge during the annual conference, continuing to demonstrate the spirit of service and professionalism that defines TJA.

Your Facility Could Be Next

If you've ever thought, "We could really use a training like that in our area," I want to personally encourage you to reach out to the board and let's make it happen. Hosting a regional training is easier than you might think, and it brings valuable learning opportunities directly to your region. It is also an excellent way to showcase your facility, build relationships with neighboring agencies, and contribute to the advancement of our profession.

Every time we host or attend a training, we strengthen the standards that make Texas jails some of the best-run facilities in the country. Let's continue building on this momentum together.

If you are interested in hosting a training or have ideas for topics that would benefit your staff, please contact a TJA board member. We would love the opportunity to work with you to bring training to your region.

A Heartfelt Thank You

I want to sincerely thank the TJA Training Committee for their continued dedication and commitment to making these trainings

possible. Their time, energy, and passion for professional development are what keep our program strong and growing.

A special thank you to Salome Lopez, Elroy Homes, Jason Davis, Melvin Bowser, Mike Garrett, Marcy Calnan, Jess Christensen, Sheleana Davis and all of the instructors and volunteers who have helped teach and support trainings throughout the year. Your willingness to share your knowledge and experience truly embodies the spirit of service that defines our association.

I also want to recognize and thank our host

counties this year, including Travis County, Brazos County, Wilson County, Robertson County, Yoakum County, Milam County, Texas State University and Lubbock County. Without agencies and organizations willing to open their doors and host neighboring counties for training opportunities, our regional training platform would not be possible.

The continued success and expansion of these programs demonstrate what is possible when correctional professionals unite around a shared commitment to education, leadership, and operational excellence. Together, we are strengthening the future of Texas corrections.

UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

2026 Jail Management Issues Conference

August 31–September 4, 2026 • Galveston, TX • See Website for Pricing

13th Annual Mental Health Conference

November 30–December 3, 2026 • Galveston, TX • \$310.00 (before November 13, 2026)

2027 Gang Supervision and Investigation Conference

January 18–23, 2026 • San Marcos, TX • \$285.00 (before January 4, 2027)

2027 Women in Criminal Justice

February 16–19, 2027 • Galveston, TX • See Website for Pricing

41st Annual TJA Conference

April 26–30, 2027 • Frisco, TX • See Website for Pricing

2027 Leadership for Corrections Conference

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JAIL STANDARDS SHOWDOWN

by: Aimee Crockett, TJA Treasurer

A tale as old as time. The Texas Commission on Jail Standards has been holding the jail standard trivia style game for years. For more years than most of us can remember. The stadium seating in that small room of the Renaissance Hotel in Austin would be filled to overflowing while a crude PowerPoint was displayed on a screen. Opposing teams would literally put their heads together, scribble their multiple-choice answers on a small dry-erase board, and hold it up to the TCJS monitor, who would determine whether they were correct, keep score, and update the brackets. The “Courtroom Challenge” proved the best of the best in jail standards knowledge. Long time winners from Grayson, Lubbock and Travis counties held their winning titles with pride.

A creative revamp brought forth the solo competition and “Jailpardy” was born. This style of play required not only knowledge of the jail standards and the value of each question, but also strategic wagering during the Final Jailpardy portion of the game. This version pitted staff from the same county against each other and showed who really had the chops.

Currently the version of the “Jail Standards Showdown” uses a widely adopted online game format. This style rewards both accuracy and speed. This new and improved version has challenged the TCJS staff as well as the

students. The need for a bank of challenging questions is met by creative and knowledgeable inspectors. Contestants are selected by their respective agencies through a variety of methods. Often, they secure an opportunity to attend next year’s conference and compete again based on their performance in the competition. Certain agencies and contestants have earned reputations as consistent winners. They are often perceived as representatives of larger counties or as staff members who spend the entire year preparing for the competition. But in truth, knowledge of jail standards is the responsibility of each licensed county jailer in the state of

Texas and basic knowledge of these is attained in the basic licensing course. The standards are available online to anyone willing to study them.

This year’s competition was referred to as a “David vs. Goliath” battle. But in truth it was a story of tenacity. In 2025, a duo was encouraged to compete and got close enough to taste the sweet victory but didn’t make the podium. In 2026, they returned to the battleground to achieve the victory they got a glimpse of the year before. It was a battle royale. Emerging from the losers’ bracket, they found themselves needing to defeat multiple teams twice to capture the championship. It was an electric room as the scores were within single digits and the first-place position jockeyed back and forth. In the end, Smith County (Marvin Martin and Ashley Hampton) took first place for the first time





ever and following them in second place was Lubbock County 3 (Alicia Roach and Joann Moore) and in third was Travis County 3 (John Young and Isaac Harper).

Every contestant should be commended for their willingness to step into the spotlight, represent their agency, and compete in front of their peers. The TCJS staff are to be recognized for their commitment to the legitimacy and spirit of the competition. Who knows what will happen in the next installment of the Jail Standards Showdown, but I am confident it will be another nail-biter.

To learn more about The Texas Commission on Jail Standards, visit their website at: www.tcjs.state.tx.us

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Honoring Excellence:

40th Annual Texas Jail Association Awards Banquet

by: Abigail McClish, TJA 1st Vice President

The Texas Jail Association's 40th Annual Conference culminated in a memorable Awards Banquet on May 7, 2026, where members from across the state gathered to recognize the outstanding achievements, leadership, and service of professionals dedicated to the field of corrections. The milestone event celebrated four decades of progress while recognizing the individuals and organizations whose service continues to strengthen the profession.

Celebrating Distinguished Leaders and Professionals

The evening's highest honor, the Hall of Fame Award, was presented to **Edwardo Jackson** of Travis County. This recognition reflects a career defined by sustained excellence, leadership, and a profound impact on the Texas Jail Association and the corrections community. Jackson's contributions have helped shape the profession, and his legacy stands as a benchmark for those who follow.

The President's Award was awarded to **Aimee Crockett** of Smith County in recognition of her exceptional service and unwavering support of the Association. This award highlights individuals who go above and beyond in advancing the mission of TJA, and Crockett's dedication ex-



Edwardo Jackson



Aimee Crockett



Kurbin Kakaj

emplifies the spirit of leadership and commitment that drives the organization forward.

The prestigious Jerry Baggs Leadership Award, named after the Association's founder, was presented to **Kurbin Kakaj** of Travis County. This award honors individuals who demonstrate visionary leadership and a deep commitment to the advancement of corrections. Kakaj's leadership reflects innovation, integrity, and a forward-thinking approach that continues to strengthen the profession.

Recognizing Excellence in Service and Courage

The Detention Officer of the Year – Professional Service Award was awarded to **Tilisa Gaslin** of Travis County. This honor recognizes exceptional professionalism, dedication, and daily commitment to excellence in detention operations. Gaslin's work represents the highest standards of service within the profession.

The Valor Award was presented to **Christopher Carlisle and Sarah Owens** of Lubbock County for their extraordinary bravery in the line of duty. This award recognizes acts of courage that go beyond the call of duty, and their actions exemplify the strength, composure, and selflessness required in critical moments.

The Lifesaving Award was awarded to **Jason Todd** of Lubbock County in recognition of decisive and life-preserving actions. This honor underscores the vital role detention professionals play in protecting the lives of those in their care, often under urgent and high-pressure circumstances.

Honoring Legacy and Lasting Impact

A deeply meaningful moment of the evening was the presentation of the Distinguished Service Award to **Rodney Cooper**, recognizing



Tilisa Gaslin



Christopher Carlisle & Sarah Owens



Jason Todd



Rodney Cooper's Family



Trinity Services Group



Brandon Wood

a career marked by dedication, humility, and lasting contributions to the Texas Jail Association and the field of corrections. His legacy of service and mentorship continues to inspire colleagues across the state.

Recognizing Partnership and Support

The Vendor of the Year Award was presented to **Trinity Services Group**, acknowledging their continued partnership and support of the Texas Jail Association. Their commitment to service and collaboration plays a vital role in enhancing the resources and opportunities available to TJA members.

The Leadership Award was awarded to **Brandon Wood** of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in recognition of his leadership and ongoing contributions to the advancement of correctional standards and practices across Texas. His work reflects a commitment to professionalism, accountability, and continuous improvement within the field.

A Continued Commitment to Excellence

Each award presented during the 40th Annual Conference represents more than individual achievement, it reflects the collective strength and professionalism of the corrections community across Texas. From acts of courage and life-saving intervention to years of dedicated leadership and service, these recipients embody the values that define the Texas Jail Association.

As TJA looks toward the future, the accomplishments recognized during this year's banquet serve as a powerful reminder of the impact of dedicated professionals working together to advance the field. Congratulations to all of this year's award recipients. Your service continues to inspire and elevate the standards of our profession.

Entertainment Report

by: Lt. Levi Vance, Entertainment Committee Chair

I would like to thank everyone for making the first-ever Levi Vance Singles Cornhole Tournament and the Levi Vance Doubles Cornhole Tournament a huge success. Without the participation and support of our membership, these tournaments would not have been as enjoyable or successful as they were.

A special thank you goes to Montgomery Technology Systems, LLC for sponsoring the Singles Tournament on Tuesday evening. I would also like to thank the sponsors of the Doubles Tournament on Wednesday evening: NCIC Correctional Communications, ICS Jail Supplies, Brinkley Sargent Wiginton Architects and Sydaptic inc. Your support is greatly appreciated.

Congratulations to the winners of the Singles Tournament:

1st Place

Melvin Bowser, Texas Commission on Jail Standards

2nd Place

Doug Chambers, Brazos County

Congratulations to the winners of the Doubles Tournament:

1st Place

Melvin Bowser and Doug Chambers

2nd Place

Justin Marinari, Brazos County, and Bryce Thompson, Wylie Municipal Jail

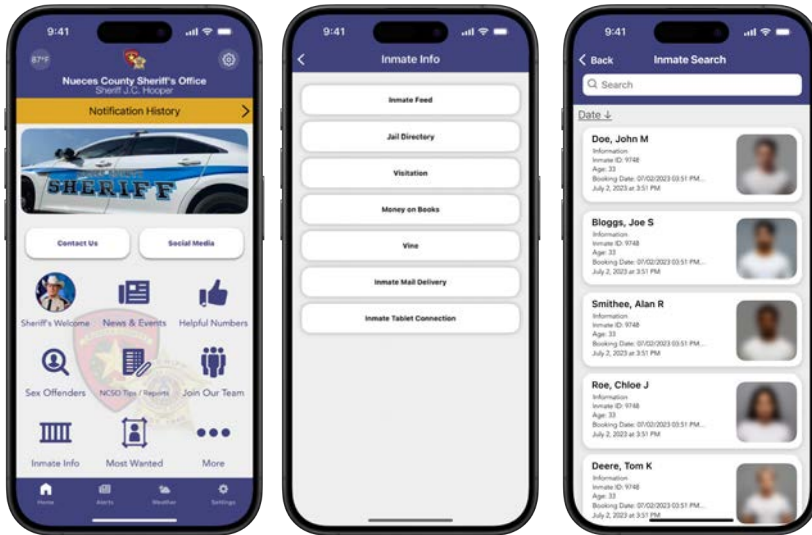
Thank you again to everyone who participated and helped make these tournaments a success.





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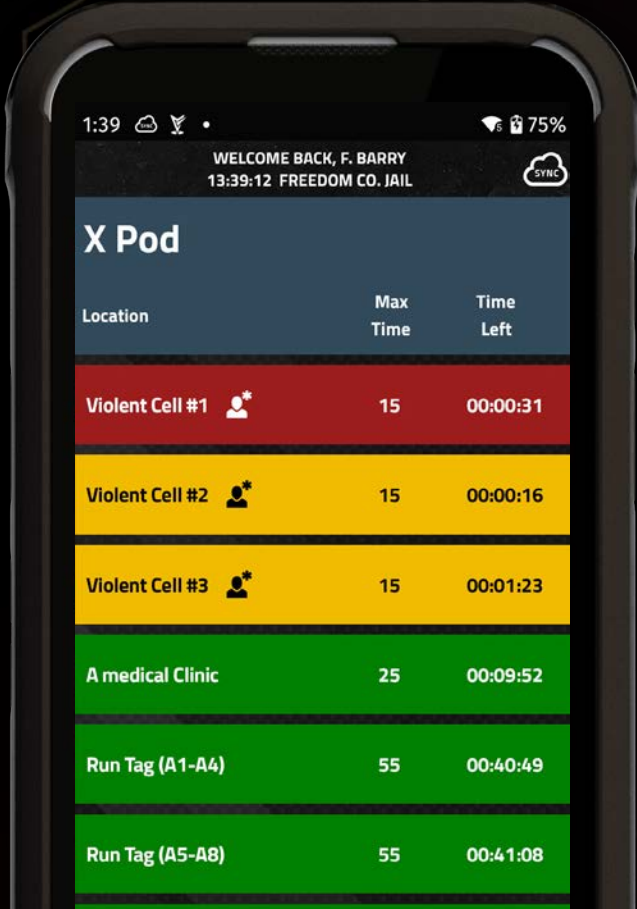


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TJA 3RD VICE PRESIDENT

LES KARNES

Captain, Brown County Sheriff's Office

I am deeply honored to have been elected as your 3rd Vice President. I want to extend my sincere gratitude for your support, your vote, and the trust you have placed in me to help lead this incredible organization.

My journey in corrections began in 2002, and throughout my years as a floor officer, supervisor, and now administrator, I have always believed that our greatest asset is our people. As I step into this role, my commitment to you remains focused on empowerment through education. I look forward to working alongside the board to advocate for high-level training and the standardized excellence our profession demands and deserves.

We serve a vital role within the Texas criminal justice system, and I am eager to represent your interests as we continue to elevate the standards of our profession. Thank you again for this opportunity. I look forward to serving you and to the work we will accomplish together in the years ahead.



TJA DIRECTOR

JUSTIN MARINARI

Lieutenant, Brazos County Sheriff's Office

I would like to take a moment to thank everyone for their support and confidence in allowing me to serve on the Texas Jail Association Board of Directors.

I'm honored to have the opportunity to represent our membership and give back to an organization that has provided so much to me throughout my career. One of the primary reasons I sought a position on the Board is my belief in serving others and being a voice for the professionals who work in our jails every day.

Over the years, I've seen firsthand the dedication, professionalism, and sacrifices made by corrections staff across Texas. I look forward to working alongside the Board to support our members, strengthen our association, and advance the mission of TJA.

I encourage our members to stay involved, share their ideas, and seek opportunities to participate in TJA activities and initiatives. Our association is only as strong as its members, and your input truly makes a difference.

Thank you again for your trust, support, and confidence. I'm looking forward to serving you this year and continuing to give back to a profession that means so much to me.



TJA DIRECTOR

MISTY DIAZ

Jail Administrator, Lamb County Sheriff's Office

I would like to thank the Texas Jail Association for the opportunity to serve on the Board. It has truly been an honor to work alongside so many dedicated professionals who care deeply about our jails, our staff, and the people we serve every day.

I am very grateful for the trust and confidence that was placed in me to represent our members and be part of the important work the Association does across the state.

The Texas Jail Association continues to make a positive impact by promoting professionalism, training, leadership, and teamwork within our profession. Through this experience, I have gained valuable friendships, support, and knowledge that I will always appreciate.

Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to serve. It has been a rewarding experience, and I look forward to continuing to support the Texas Jail Association and the work it does for all of us in corrections.



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Jerry Baggs Scholarship Offers Opportunities

by: Jc Watts, Jail Corporal, Nolan County

Earlier this year, I was awarded the Jerry Baggs Memorial Scholarship. This Scholarship made it possible for me to attend the National Jail Leadership Command Academy (NJLCA), At Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, as part of Class #55. As a newly appointed supervisor, I believe this academy class is a crucial corner stone in the foundation of build-

ing a successful career as a supervisor in the corrections field. The (NJLCA) is a week full of information, instruction, and hands-on learning. The instructors and speakers provide you with the tools you will need to become a successful leader and, more importantly, a mentor to the staff you are expected to lead and develop.

During my time at the (NLJCA), I met other corrections supervisors from Texas and around the country that provided me with different ideas and ways of operating their facilities. They also shared with me the different programs their departments had in place to benefit, support, and advance their staff and facilities. The (NJLCA) curriculum and instructors challenged me to step outside of my comfort zone and rethink the way I look at leadership and the mentoring role a good leader must possess if they wish to succeed in developing not only themselves, but the staff they lead and mentor, that will replace them in the future.

After returning from the (NLJCA), I began working, along side my supervisors and Sheriff, to create programs that will acknowledge and reward the hard work our staff puts into the success of our department. I have also been researching the steps needed to establish a wellness program for our staff, to recognize issues and provide help for staff that need it, as they operate in this high stress career.

I am a firm believer in the work the (NJLCA) does to create better leaders and mentors for the future of the corrections field. I will be working to get all our current and future supervisors the opportunity to attend this great

academy. I benefited a great deal from attending the (NLJCA) and I want my coworkers to have that same experience. I cannot recommend the National Jail Leadership Command Academy enough to anyone that wants to be the best mentor they can for their staff and department. I also cannot thank the board members that awarded me the Jerry Baggs Memorial Scholarship enough for making it possible for me to attend the (NJLCA) Class #55.

I want to thank you again for being awarded the Jerry Baggs Memorial Scholarship and for the opportunity to be a part of the NJLCA Class #55. I received a lot of information and really enjoyed my time there. More importantly, I believe I left that academy with information that will benefit my organization and assist me in being a better leader. I am a firm believer in the difference this academy is making in the future leaders of this industry and will do what I can to help promote it. Without the help from the Jerry Baggs Memorial Scholarship, I would not have had the opportunity to attend this academy. I am very grateful for this Scholarship and for the privilege of being chosen to receive it.

Thank you,
Jail Corporal Jc Watts
Nolan County Sheriff's Office

SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN!

Visit the TJA Website for full information and application forms.

JERRY BAGGS MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

The scholarship is for tuition to a class of the National Jail Leadership Command Academy.

PAST PRESIDENT'S SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship is offered to eligible students pursuing a degree at a college or university.

DEADLINES

Spring 2027 Semester - December 1, 2026 // **Fall 2027 Semester** - July 1, 2027

The Chaplain's Corner

Jason Davis, Lieutenant, Brazos County

Integrity and Professionalism Behind the Walls

Working inside a jail is not easy, and it isn't for everyone. Every shift brings stress, challenges, and situations that test your patience and character. As detention officers, professionalism is more than following policy; it is about doing the right thing even when nobody is watching.

Proverbs 10:9 says, *"Whoever walks in integrity walks securely."* That means being honest, treating people fairly, supporting fellow officers, and carrying ourselves with respect no matter the situation.

Professionalism also means remembering that how we respond matters. Inmates may not always remember what we say, but they will remember how we treated

them. We can maintain security while still demonstrating dignity, self-control, and compassion.

Our job is important. The uniform represents authority, but our actions represent our character. Every day we have the opportunity to be an example, both as detention officers and as Christians serving others in a difficult environment.

Integrity cannot be turned on and off. It should follow us everywhere we go, especially behind the walls.

— **Jason Davis**

Chaplain of the Texas Jail Association



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What's Happening Around the State?

TRAVIS COUNTY

Honoring Our Corrections Professionals During National Correctional Officers and Employees Week

The saying goes, “Everything’s bigger in Texas,” and the Travis County Sheriff’s Office certainly lived up to it during this year’s National Correctional Officers and Employees Week celebration. Throughout the week, Corrections staff across the agency were celebrated in creative and meaningful ways that highlighted the professionalism, resilience, teamwork, and dedication they demonstrate every day while keeping our facilities safe, secure, and running smoothly.

As a family of highly trained professionals, TCSO remains committed to providing innovative law enforcement and correctional services through collaboration, compassion, professionalism, and service. National Correctional Officers and Employees Week provided an opportunity to spotlight the men and women who consistently embody those values while serving both the agency and the community with integrity and pride.

The celebration launched Monday with “Star Wars Day: May the 4th Be With You,” bringing excitement, laughter, and plenty of galactic fun to kick off the week. Staff enjoyed themed games, treats, out-of-this-galaxy snacks, refreshing drinks, giveaways, and activities that created an energetic atmosphere while strengthening the camaraderie that makes Corrections such a close-knit team.

Tuesday’s Cinco de Mayo festivities kept the

momentum going with festive food, colorful piñatas, lively games, and opportunities for staff to relax, connect, and enjoy time together. Throughout the day, employees participated in drawings for gift cards, prizes, candy, and giveaways as a small token of appreciation for the tremendous work they do each day in maintaining safe and dignified environments for staff, inmates, and the public.

Wednesday turned up the heat with one of the week’s favorite traditions — the Chili Cook Off. Friendly competition, team spirit, and plenty of delicious recipes brought employees together for an afternoon filled with laughter, camaraderie, and healthy rivalry. The event showcased the strong relationships, trust, and teamwork that serve as the backbone of Corrections operations and reflect the core values of TCSO.

Thursday morning’s Cowboy Breakfast brought a true Texas touch to the celebration. Staff enjoyed a hearty breakfast, rodeo-themed activities, and fellowship while continuing a week focused on honoring the service, professionalism, and commitment demonstrated daily by Corrections personnel across the agency.

The week wrapped up Friday with the Law & Lather Car Wash celebration, where staff enjoyed sliders, nachos, snow cones, music, and fellowship while Command Staff and volunteers rolled up their sleeves to help wash vehicles and close out the week on a fun and uplifting note. The event reflected the spirit of collaboration, openness, and support that continues to strengthen relationships throughout the agency and the Travis County community.

What's Happening Around the State?

In addition to the themed events, daily giveaways, prizes, and gift cards added excitement throughout the week, culminating in the announcement of 10 Golden Ticket winners who earned the opportunity to enjoy a special lunch with their Captain.

The week's success was made possible through the generous support of vendors, Command Staff, and volunteers whose time, donations, and contributions helped make each event possible. Their continued support played a major role in creating a meaningful and memorable celebration for staff across the agency.

As our staffing continues to grow, we look forward to making National Correctional Officers and Employees Week bigger and better each year as another way to highlight the hard work, sacrifices, and commitment of our Corrections professionals.

National Correctional Officers and Employees Week serves as an important reminder of the professionalism, compassion, and service demonstrated by Corrections personnel every day. Through trust, com-



munity, security, and openness, the Travis County Sheriff's Office remains committed to fostering strong relationships within the agency and the community we serve. We are grateful for the unwavering dedication of our Corrections staff and appreciate everyone who helped make this year's celebration such a success.



TRAVIS COUNTY

Akins High School Correctional Services Internship (CSI)

The Class of 2026 from the Akins High School Correctional Services Internship (CSI) program graduated on May 13, 2026. Through a partnership with the Travis County Sheriff's Office, students in the program have the unique opportunity to visit both the Downtown Travis County Jail and the Travis County Correctional Complex in Del Valle to learn directly from correctional officers working in the field.

The goal of the Correctional Services Internship program is to prepare students for future careers in corrections by providing early exposure to correctional operations, professional mentorship, and hands-on learning experiences. The program has already seen success, with former Akins High

What's Happening Around the State?

School students being hired into correctional careers following graduation.



TRAVIS COUNTY Promotions

On April 15, 2026, Travis County Sheriff Sally Hernandez promoted staff member **John Young** to Corrections Bureau Lieutenant and **Destiny Owens** to Corrections Bureau Sergeant.



KENDALL COUNTY Regional Training

SB 1563 addresses the treatment of veterans within the criminal justice system by enhancing the training requirements for county jailers in Texas. Texas commission on Jail Standards trainer, Melvin Bowser instructed four sessions of this class, Approximately 75 participants attended including jailers from Kendall, Kerr, Blanco, Gillespie and Houston Counties.



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