

Soapbox: Mental health issues impacting law enforcement

5:05 p.m. MST March 3, 2015



(Photo: Courtesy Photo)

The U.S. penal system, saturated with inmates who suffer mental health problems, is facing unique and difficult issues.

With more than 2.2 million people currently in prisons and jails, the U.S. has the highest incarceration rate of any developed country. The following statistics, from the 10th Edition of the World Population List, International Center for Prison Studies, is a sample of the disparity between the U.S. and other countries regarding the number of imprisoned people.

Number of incarcerated people per 100,000 of population: United States, 716; Rwanda, 492; Russia, 475; Brazil, 274; Canada, 118; Germany, 79; India, 30; and the world, 144.

According to the survey, the U.S., as of 2013, had imprisoned a higher percent of its population than any of the 222 countries and territories included in the study.

After surveying the prison populations in the U.S., the Federal Bureau of Prison Statistics reports that people with mental health illnesses constitute significantly more than half of the prison and jail populations nationwide.

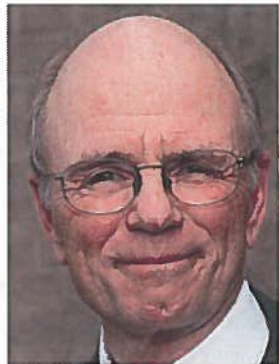
A 2014 report from the Treatment Advocacy Center reports the number of incarcerated individuals in the U.S., who are experiencing serious mental illness, is more than 10 times the number of people with similar illnesses who are treated in psychiatric hospitals.

Research from the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill indicates 44 percent of seriously mentally ill people have been arrested at least once during their lives.

The statistics are staggering. It is difficult to imagine how the penal system in the U.S. arrived at the position of incarcerating more than 1 million people who are dealing with mental illnesses.

Thibedeau: Don't miss out on \$85 million in tax credits

6:51 p.m. MDT March 15, 2015



(Photo: Coloradoan Library)

We're less than a month away from tax day, April 15, and taxes are on my mind.

You may be surprised to learn that an estimated 50,000 Coloradans miss out on as much as \$85 million in tax credits each year, according to The Piton Foundation.

Why are so many families, including our friends, neighbors and co-workers here in Larimer County missing out on these much-needed refunds? Many people don't know they are eligible, don't know the tax credits exist or simply don't file a tax return.

Who is eligible? Hard-working families in Colorado that earned less than \$52,000 in 2014 from wages, self-employment or farming could be eligible to receive up to \$6,000 or more in tax refunds through the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax benefits. Many people will qualify for the first time this year due to changes in their income, their marital status or parental status, according to the IRS. Whether or not families owe any federal income tax, these credits can put thousands of dollars into their pockets.

Many families use tax refunds to pay for necessities, such as utilities, food, housing, transportation and health care. The extra money in their pockets means they are relying less on government benefits and nonprofit services, and spending more in the local economy. In fact, economists estimate that tax credit dollars are re-spent three to five times in the local business community, providing a sizeable economic bump.



COLORADOAN

A procrastinator's guide to tax time

[\(http://www.coloradoan.com/story/money/2015/03/07/procrastinators-guide-tax-time/24321877/\)](http://www.coloradoan.com/story/money/2015/03/07/procrastinators-guide-tax-time/24321877/)

Tax credits help local children, too. According to Piton, programs such as the EITC are associated with a boost in children's school readiness and achievement, health outcomes and future economic success. When parents aren't worried about how to pay for food or how to pay for new car tires so they can get to work safely, they can focus more on helping their kids succeed in school.

This matters. When families are stable and children succeed, we all win.

Fortunately, help is available to ensure working families get the credits they are qualified to receive, which results in more money in their pockets. At six Northern Colorado locations, IRS-certified volunteer tax preparers are helping thousands of families file federal and state tax returns.

In Fort Collins, services are available at Fort Collins Senior Center, Old Town Library, Council Tree Library and CSU Business School's Rockwell Hall.

In Loveland, services are available at First United Methodist Church. In Windsor, services are available at Clearview Library.

You may also qualify for free tax preparation services if you are 60 years of age or older, or if you are home bound or have special needs.

Those interested in having their taxes prepared should bring income documents from all jobs worked throughout the calendar year, as well as their social security number and a valid photo ID.



COLORADOAN

Don't forget about tax benefits of remodeling

[\(http://www.coloradoan.com/story/life/2015/03/06/forget-tax-benefits-remodeling/24445171/\)](http://www.coloradoan.com/story/life/2015/03/06/forget-tax-benefits-remodeling/24445171/)

For complete information, including days and hours of operation, call 2-1-1 or 970-407-7066 or visit <http://noconow.co/taxprepinfo> (<http://noconow.co/taxprepinfo>).

March 21: Thumbs Up & Thumbs Down

Coloradoan staff 10:04 p.m. MDT March 20, 2015



(Photo: Coloradoan library)

With all the negative publicity about police, I feel the need to compliment the Fort Collins Police Service's Officer Michelle Leschinsky.

When I fell on my bike after hitting a patch of ice, she was there holding my head and shoulders off the ice when I came to. I must have gone into shock when my hip bone broke. She was the first one at the scene and it sure felt good to have that human contact. Also, she left me a note about who had my bicycle. I will always remember the kindness of Officer Leschinsky.

Bill Hillsmeier, Fort Collins.

CASA of Larimer County would like to give a big thumbs-up to Jennie Coggins, Linda Dillon, Chelsea Hackwell, Kim McDaniel, Gloria Stauff, Jennifer Sutton and Miriam Wilhelm for their dedication to more than 40 hours of training. We congratulate them for being sworn in by Chief Judge Schapanski as CASA volunteers who are committed to providing a voice in court for abused and neglected children. CASA of Larimer County would also like to give a thumbs-up to Joan Flory, a CASA volunteer, for her special recognition by Team Fort Collins for her work in our community as a CASA Volunteer.

Annette Hoyt, Fort Collins.

Fort Collins Breakfast Rotary wants to thank buyers of raffle tickets toward our annual Raffle Event. There were 420 raffle tickets sold at \$100 per ticket. The winner of \$10,000 was Ann Bedient, a lender at Home State Bank. Net proceeds from ticket sales and the event totaled more than \$28,000, to be used to fund local and international charities supported by the club. A special thanks to the following sponsors and donors: The Backline; DFV Wines; Domino's Pizza; Horse & Dragon Brewing Company; Nordy's BBQ; CSU Rotaract Club; Southern Wine and Spirits of Colorado; Windsong Estate Event Center; and many Rotarians.

Kathy Miner, Fort Collins.

Thumbs-up to the Climate Citizen Advisory Committee, the Brendle Group, the Rocky Mountain Institute and Fort Collins City staff for developing the 2015 Climate Action Plan (CAP) Framework. Another thumbs up to City Council for unanimously approving on March 3 the new CAP, which puts us on the path toward reducing our greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions 80 percent from 2005 levels by 2030. That decision helped solidify the city's position as a leader in the effort to address global climate change. Hopefully, the 2015 CAP will inspire other cities to adopt similarly ambitious climate goals.

Kevin Cross, Fort Collins Sustainability Group Steering Committee.

Thumbs-up to Jim Tucci and the amazing folks at American Furniture Warehouse for donating furniture to ChildSafe!

ChildSafe has reached capacity in our current space, which required that we rent additional space in the basement. American Furniture was kind enough to donate the necessary furniture so that we are able to immediately serve additional clients and help victims of childhood abuse heal and thrive. Thumbs-up, too, to D.P. Dough for its fundraiser to benefit ChildSafe. On Feb. 19, one dollar from each calzone sale went to support ChildSafe and provide services to victims of childhood sexual abuse. We are so appreciative of your support!

Krista Chalise, resource development coordinator with ChildSafe, Fort Collins.

Thumbs-up to great community and volunteer support for Poudre River Friends of the Library! We recently staged two book sales to raise money for Poudre Libraries Summer Reading Program, History Comes Alive series, Kevin Cook Writing Colorado talks and much more. Our volunteers donated hundreds of hours of their time to sort, transport, and set up books for these events and to serve as cashiers and floor help during the sales. Book sales require a year-round effort from our Friends to carefully sort and choose the right books to offer. Poudre River Public Library District staff and Front Range Community College put up with the challenges and disruption that these events bring. And our book-loving Northern Colorado supporters turned out in force to support such a great cause and replenish their bookshelves. Thank you all for your help.

Robin Gard, president, Poudre River Friends of the Library.

A hearty thumbs-up and congratulations to Don Svedman, selected by the Fort Collins Pioneer Association as Pioneer of The Year for his outstanding service and achievements in Colorado agriculture. He served as Extension Agent, directed adult and 4-H programs, was on the Board of the Colorado Hereford Association and has been the manager of the Colorado State Fair, to name a few of his accomplishments. Don recently received awards from

Rethink the library: Next gen becomes resource for tech, entrepreneurs

Updated: 03/17/2015 10:47:15 AM MDT

DenverPost.com

At some Colorado libraries, there are no overdue fines, no Dewey Decimal System and absolutely no shushing!

A revolution is underway. And leading the charge is Anythink, the rebooted seven-branch Adams County system, which has a smattering of digital studios, 3-D printers, photography labs and a cafe. Anythink has gone from one of the state's worst-funded library systems to a national leader within a decade.

On Monday, Anythink's innovation team was in Austin, Texas, at South by Southwest Interactive to inspire the tech community into collaborating with libraries. Joining a group of spirited librarians known as lib*interactive, the Anythink team hit the streets equipped with temporary tattoos, colorful chalk and a snappy slogan: "Not the same old shhh."

"Technology is such a huge part of the service that we offer now. That's why it's important for Anythink to be down here," said Stacie Ledden, Anythink's director of innovations and brand strategy, who also led a seminar called "Anythink: The Brand that Sparked a Revolution."

"Lib*interactive does a lot of outreach and with technologists looking for co-working space, we want to get libraries on their radar," she said, adding that a chance meeting with a Sony employee looked promising.

The effort has at least gotten other librarians on its radar. Several others shared what their libraries were doing with SXSW presentations of their own, including coworking at the library (Washington, D.C.), the library as an incubator (San Antonio, Texas) and how big-data startups should hire librarians (Columbia University in New York).



Stacie Ledden and Javier Gonzalez show off their temporary tattoos.

"It's kind of an exciting time for libraries," said Larra Clark, program director at American Library Association. "Maybe what you need is a 3-D printer to prototype, or a digital media lab to cut a commercial. We want to say that these are resources that are available. We have great librarians who can help research your patents and trademarks."

Clark sat on a panel about how the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library in Washington, D.C., started the Dream

Lab coworking space. In exchange for space, entrepreneurs spend an hour training the community on digital literacy or information technology. The lab has hosted more than 50

Window Wonderland

A Decorative Angle to Library Teen Participation

Several years ago, one of our Teen Interesting Reader Society (Teen IRS) members asked if the group could paint the large, bright windows in the teen area at our Harmony Library Branch for the winter holidays.

After getting permission and then buying washable acrylic paints and other supplies (which came from our teen programming budget), a small Teen IRS group gathered in early December to paint the windows. They had a lot of fun, the windows looked festive, and everyone enjoyed seeing the artwork by teens. I was glad I supported them in their efforts to do this project.

Once the holidays were over, however, none of the teens wanted to come in to clean the windows, which had been the agreement before they were allowed to paint. After a few tries, I finally gave up and did it myself. Since they were not well-versed in window painting, much of the paint was applied too thickly and it took me a very long time. It was a frustrating end to a well-meaning project, and I told them that it was a good try but we would not do it again without the cleanup portion faithfully being addressed. They understood, and even though they liked doing it once, they were not motivated to do it again.

A NEW APPROACH

Fast forward to the following year. The Teen IRS girl who originally suggested the window painting project was a member of the art club at our local Fossil Ridge High School. After the project had mixed success at the library, she brought the idea of holiday window painting as a project to the club. The teens from the club approached me with an offer to paint the windows at Harmony Library and promised to clean them off when the holidays were over. Their adult art club advisor supported their offer for doing

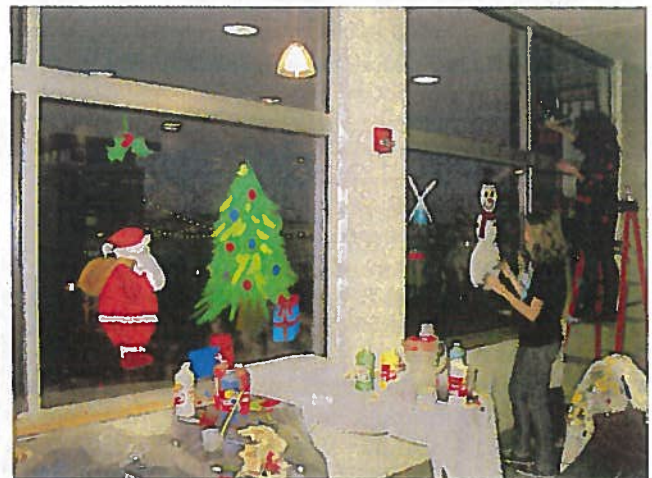
the project, and once again, I got permission to have the windows painted—and cleaned afterwards.

The teens did an amazing job! Not only did they come prepared with sketches of several high-quality, general interest holiday illustrations to transfer to the windows, they readily agreed to clean the windows after winter break and followed through. The windows turned out exceptionally nice, and we were very happy with our partnership with the art club.

For the next few years, each fall, the art club would approach us and ask if they could do the Harmony Library windows for the holidays. Three years ago, the club offered to also paint the windows of the teen area at our Council Tree Branch Library. In 2013, they said they would like to paint the teen windows at all three library branches—Harmony, Council Tree, and Old Town. We got the necessary permissions (by now the club had a great track record with our administrators), and the teens decorated the windows and reliably cleaned them off at the end of the holiday season.

In 2014, I was approached by the teen leader of the art club and the National Art Honor Society (NAHS), Sofia Shappell, who is a junior and has been involved in art clubs since freshman year, about doing the holiday projects again at all three library branches. Now, both the art club and the NAHS wanted to get involved as a joint project. Once again, we agreed. As in the past, the teens painted the windows beautifully and took care of the clean-up at the end of the season. We were on a roll.

Shappell commented, “I really love putting up the windows. It’s





me to go more often. I really like going to the library, and being able to contribute to a part of it makes me want to go more.”

Contino had not been to the library in a very long time before becoming part of the window painting projects. When I asked her if she thinks participating in the window painting is encouraging her to use the library more, she said, “Yes, I think it is because it opened up a new opportunity and resource for me that I hadn’t previously considered.”

Does your library have wonderful, large, inviting windows? Does your teen space, in particular, have such windows? You might consider approaching your local high school teen art club or clubs to see if the members want to take on similar projects for you. Get administrative permission first, figure out a budget, and check your local high schools to find out who is in charge of art instruction. If there is an art club, explain that the library has an opportunity for the teens to do creative window painting.

If they are interested, talk to the art club members about the possibilities and any limitations your library might have. For example, the teen area at my library branch has large paintable windows, plus some smaller and higher windows above them. Our administrators asked that the teens refrain from climbing up to paint the higher windows, sticking to the lower ones which were safer and extremely workable.

The teens will need to know what times they may do their work. Will you need to supervise when they are working, or can another staff member monitor them for you if you need to be absent? If you need to be present, then you’ll have to coordinate your schedule with theirs.

Be up front about cleaning the windows and get a commitment from the teens and their advisor to clear the windows in a timely manner. We even had one mom who came to help clean the windows last time to make sure it was done as they promised.

Get the supplies the teens need to do their painting. You might think about approaching your Friends of the Library group for funding or plan for the projects from your teen services budget. As mentioned earlier, washable acrylic paints are needed, as well as brushes, bowls to hold the paints and water, drop cloths, and clean-up supplies such as paper towels and window cleaner. Be sure any furniture is moved out of the way during painting and that it is moved back in place when the painting and clean-up are done.

Take pictures! You want to document the teens’ contributions to your library and preserve the artwork which will be later removed. Give the art club(s) copies of the photos along with a sincere thank you. If it is in your budget, you might even offer a little celebration for the teens at their next club meeting, complete with snacks and a photo show. Brag about the projects to your



NAHS and Art Club Request Form

Please fill out this form to submit a formal project request to National Art Honor Society and Art Club. We will process this information and get back to you as soon as possible. Remember: Submitting this form is not a guarantee that your project will be accepted for creation. All projects must be funded by the requesting party, not NAHS or Art Club.

• Required

Who? •

What club or group is requesting this project?

Who? •

What is your name? Please indicate whether you are a student or teacher.

What? •

What is the project you are requesting? (Include details such as size (exact dimensions) and how many. What materials would you like to use and when will we be able to receive them?)

When? •

When do you need the project finished by?

mm/dd/yyyy

How? •

How can we contact you? Please provide a frequently checked email or a phone number.

library staff and community. Get an article in the local newspaper if possible. Send a thank you letter to the teens’ advisor and principal.

You might be thinking, “Well, my teen advisory group could do this project. Why go to the high school art clubs?” If so, you are right—if your TAG is interested and able to do the project well, let them have a go of it, if they would like. We learned that inviting the local art clubs to do it resulted in a higher caliber of art work, allowed some teens who usually do not come to the library to supply a service that connects them to it, offered a better reliability level, and provided a way for teens who want to study art to add to their portfolios.

As Shappell said, “I’m debating doing art in college. I might take a couple of classes and do it as a hobby on the side. I think these window paintings are great practice for things like commissions and an easy, fun way to improve my painting. It gives me the chance to paint on a big surface and with a set theme, which I don’t always get in an art class.”

Contino added, “I’ve wanted to become an art teacher for as long as I can remember. I plan on studying art and art history in college. I definitely think these projects are putting me at an advantage in terms of my resume and overall art experience.”

Getting teens to turn big, empty windows into “window wonderlands” is something you might want to consider for your library as well. ■

Diane P. Tuccillo is teen services librarian at the Poudre River Public Library District in Fort Collins, CO. She is the author of Library Teen Advisory Groups (Scarecrow, 2005) and Teen-Centered Library Service: Putting Youth Participation into Practice (Libraries Unlimited, 2010). She is a longstanding member of the Editorial Advisory Board for VOYA.



PHOTO CREDIT: WICK TUCCILLO