

## CJ Committee – Recent Readings and Resources

Members of the MHCCJC might find this article interesting in light of our recent discussions. The article is entitled “The Role of Medicaid in Successful Reentry, and was posted in the Justice Center – the Council of State Governments’ website on 10-15-14. See [http://csgjusticecenter.org/corrections/media-clips/using-medicaid-to-reduce-recidivism-in-states-corrections-systems/?utm\\_source=CSG+Justice+Center+Primary+List&utm\\_campaign=c15a806340-10\\_21\\_14\\_NRRC\\_Newsletter10\\_17\\_2014&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_db9d88bcfb-c15a806340-42300469](http://csgjusticecenter.org/corrections/media-clips/using-medicaid-to-reduce-recidivism-in-states-corrections-systems/?utm_source=CSG+Justice+Center+Primary+List&utm_campaign=c15a806340-10_21_14_NRRC_Newsletter10_17_2014&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_db9d88bcfb-c15a806340-42300469)

Forwarded by Norman Briggs

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Ron Jansen forwarded this article from the St. Cloud Times on 10/20/14 ...



**David Korte**

St. Cloud Times

9:39am Oct 20

The St. Cloud prison this week celebrated its 125th anniversary with a look at the history of the oldest building in the Department of Correction system.

When Dean Weis was a kid, and doing what kids will do, his mother had a line that she used when the pugilism erupted.

"When I was a kid fighting with my brothers, my mom said, 'You're going to end up in prison someday,' " Weis said. "I don't think growing up I ever thought that I wanted to go work in the prison."

But his father worked at the prison in St. Cloud. So did an uncle. And a brother. And several cousins. His father told Weis it would be a good part-time job to help pay his way through college.

Mike Bukowski's prison pedigree includes a father who worked there for 22 years and a great-uncle who worked there from 1957-72. He also heard about the part-time wage of \$9 an hour with health benefits, better than anything else out there in the mid-1980s.

Bukowski is a sergeant and Weis is a captain at the correctional facility, both part of an extended family at the prison, which last week marked its 125th anniversary. They've both worked there for 27 years, giving them a view of the building's history from not only what they have seen but what they've heard from family and friends who came before them.

It's a inside view of a city of its own, encased in a granite wall built by inmates who took the stone from quarries on the prison property long before hydraulic lifts or hoists.

"Growing up in this area, you drive by this big wall and at the time, whether you had relatives that worked here or somebody that was in prison, it was always the iconic view of St. Cloud," Weis said. "That great big wall."

That wall surrounds a structure that still has original locks and keys for cells built in the late 1880s with hand-forged, hand-rolled steel. The ornate cuts of granite and Gothic look of the building make it a piece of art in a way, said Warden Collin Gau, who has worked at the prison for 43 years.

But the nature of what happens inside makes it necessary to keep the public on the other side of the granite wall, he said.

"It's been kind of shrouded in mystery," he said.

### Changes

The building is the oldest in the Department of Corrections system, and while its exterior remains gray and intimidating its interior has been remodeled for safety and security and a changing mission.

The prison since 1996 has been the intake facility for the DOC, the place where all adult, male inmates go first for assessment and a determination of which facility will be their long-term home.

A typical daily inmate count is 1,000-1,100. Few stay longer than 60-90 days. The prison moves out about 350-400 inmates a month.

It's a change from when sergeants knew every inmate in their cell block. Its mission isn't the only thing that's changed.

Weis and Bukowski share family stories of a time when the prison grew or raised its own food, when they harvested ice from the quarries to use in the prison, of the lore of a ghost, supposedly an employee who died in the parking lot after leaving work on his retirement day.

One of Weis' cousins was the last person to live on the third floor of the school hall, a place where prison employees paid 90 cents a day for food, laundry and a bed.

Bukowski remembers coaching the prison's tackle football team and how the players kept their equipment in their cells, one of many things that today seems unfathomable. Area softball and basketball teams came to the prison to be tested by the prison's best.

"Everybody behaved," Bukowski said. "They were here to play ball, and the inmates were there to play ball."

The football games were on Saturdays and Sundays, six games in a "season" that led to a playoff game.

"Segregation was never full when it was football season, because the big tough guys wanted to go out and they could legally bang on somebody during football season," Weis said.

"If you got into a fight during football season, you couldn't play football," Bukowski said. "So, there would be no fights in the institution in September until the middle of October. It would be fairly quiet in here. It was football time."

### New mission

The prison used to feature 12 vocational programs that were primarily geared to younger inmates, to give them the skills to succeed once they were released.

Printing, meat cutting, auto mechanic, small engine repair, furniture upholstery, woodworking and welding classes were all offered.

The prison is down to two vocational programs — barbering and masonry — because of the change to an intake facility.

"Our job now is assessments, assessments, assessments," Gau said.

The prison did 898 chemical dependency assessments in the last quarter and 1,400-1,500 educational assessments, he said.

And while the vocational programs are mostly gone, the mission of the facility is more than ever about helping inmates succeed on the outside. It's a success story that Gau likes to reinforce.

"We have about a 75 percent success rate," he said. "I don't talk about recidivism. I prefer to talk about success. Seventy-five percent of our offenders, out three years without a felony conviction. That's a pretty good rate of success."

Gau has seen his share of changes in the 43 years he's worked at the prison. When he started, there were no radios, no cameras, no computers. There were no women working at the facility except for clerical staff.

"That's a big change in the white, male-dominated prison system. And it didn't go without struggles," he said. "So there have been a lot of changes, and the biggest has been technology and our ability to deliver programming."

'Majority of them are just regular guys'

The prison population tends to mirror what's happening in the community, he said. The rise of methamphetamine saw an increase in drug offenders. These days gangs, called "security threat groups," are a concern.

"When there are issues in the community, almost always you have those kind of issues in your prison," Gau said. "Because it spills in. Not necessarily that you like it."

Weis and Bukowski acknowledge that prison can be a dangerous place. The threat is always there. But communication is the best tool to minimize threats and build rapport with inmates.

They both had heard the stories from family members about how mean and intimidating inmates can be.

"To me, that just wasn't the case," Bukowski said. "The majority of them are just regular guys that made mistakes in life and got sent here and they're doing their time. And when they get out, they're going to be citizens of society again."

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