

HOPE FOR CHANGE

GREY OWLS COMMITTEE NEWSLETTER

The Lifers and Long Term Committee is a new sub-committee called the Grey Owls. This sub-committee will be composed of individuals age 50 and over interested in having mature conversations on certain issues. Send all request slips to the Attention Anthony Brown, HFC Treasurer and Grey Owls founder.

ADDRESSING A GROWING AGING CRISIS

From a Right-to-Know Act request in May of 2022; there are 456 men in SCI Forest that are 50 years old and older. Currently 2,700 men & women doing life (or) long sentences in PA that are 50 years and older, which is considered geriatric by the PA DOC. There are over 10,000 that sit in SCI's in PA that are 50 years old and older. There are an estimated 265,000 elderly prisoners in the U.S. serving the remaining time they have left on their long sentences (or) doing life. That is around 13% of all inmates across the country, while there may be some newbies receiving their first sentences at the age of 50, most elderly prisoners are serving out time for crimes committed in their earlier years.

A Growing Burden:

According to the American Civil Liberties Union, it costs twice as much to maintain an elderly person than a younger one under the age of 50. As elderly within the prison system are living longer (a worldwide trend for all elderly people), their medical expenses become greater; placing a financial burden on an already encumbered institution. It costs approximately \$66,294 a year to maintain an elderly prisoner; depending on which state you look at. The highest annual estimate for an incarcerated elderly person was \$102,405, but the average is around \$66,294.

"The annual taxpayer burden of incarcerating the estimated 265,000 elderly inmate is roughly 16 billion dollars."

- The greater the amount of care needed, the higher the cost to the state and in turn tax payers who are now paying almost double of what was paid a couple decades ago. The annual taxpayer burden of incarcerating the estimated 265,000 elderly

inmates is roughly \$16 billion. To put that number in perspective, that is more than the Department of Education's budget for state improvements in Elementary and Secondary schools, and it is more than the entire Department of Energy's annual budget.

Proposed Solutions to the Economic Burden

There is little that can be done to ease the financial and still uphold human rights: human rights that guarantee inmates the right to dignity, to receive adequate Healthcare and medical attention, including mental health and disability accommodations, as well as the right to be treated with respect for their humanity, providing these fundamental human rights and the unintended consequences of a population aging in prison, a few solutions have been brought up for consideration and further review.

- Consider early release for an end of life issues over 50 years old. This would not only reduce medical costs within the correctional institution, it would allow for those released to be on parole and still under supervision, given the decreased likelihood that a frail elderly person would do anything to end up being put back in prison, this option would provide the biggest saving to an overburdened prison system and address the borderline elderly abuse and neglect concerns that are brought about by the system's failed geriatric infrastructure.
- Implement healthy self-care programs geared towards geriatric activities to reduce the risk of healthcare complications, including geriatric counseling to help inmates cope with the psychological aspects of aging in prison.
- Provide geriatric training to medical staff to improve early detection of common geriatric ailments that reducing responds to early intervention, e.g., arthritis, asthma, diabetes, poor eye sight, bad back, high blood pressure, Alzheimer disease, dementia, respiratory ailments, strokes. Along with poor nutrition that cause constipation (or) diarrhea and mental health such as Bi-polar, anxiety, depression and stress that will create significant challenges for prison.
- Based on average incarceration costs, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) is spending \$220 million per year to incarcerate 3,892 people who have already served at least 20 years, the true cost is undoubtedly higher, because incarceration costs increase dramatically as people age and need more medical care.

Extreme sentences harm Communities, Families, and the Economy

- Extreme sentences deprive the community of valuable human resources, many people serving extreme sentences could be productive economic assets in their communities if released and could play important roles in community violence intervention.
- Extreme sentences devastate families emotionally, psychologically, and financially, and contribute to poverty.
- Unless dramatic changes are made to sentencing and parole policies, the number of older prisoners could soar as high as 400,000 by 2030, posing a tremendous threat to state and federal budgets.

Quality of Life and Elderly Neglect Concerns

Getting the right medical attention is only one of the equations for allowing the prison population to age with dignity. The emotional and mental repercussions of aging in prison has a profound psychological effect. Prisons were not designed with the elderly in mind, and the system infrastructure reflects it's inability to care for elderly inmates financially or qualitatively, bringing up elderly abuse and neglect concerns.

A series of short term reforms are needed for immediate relief. There is a serious need to re-evaluate the necessity of keeping elderly people incarcerated. At what point does a sentence become cruel? At what point is an inmate no longer deemed dangerous to society or at what point has their punishment been sufficient, their behavior corrected, which is, after all the point of a corrections institution. The issue of aging in prison, raises difficult questions with no easy solutions, but talking about it openly is a step in the right direction.

Department of Corrections (DOC)

Seeks \$2.9 Billion from Pa.'s next state budget for 2023. The spending proposal for the DOC and the Board of Probation & Parole in Gov. Josh Shapiro's budget offer totals nearly \$2.9 Billion from the state's general fund. A 5.8% increase. The bulk of the proposed increase is for operations of corrections' 24 facilities, followed by elderly men & women inmates' medical care.

We have been attempting to have our first Grey Owls meeting but encountered scheduling conflicts. We have recently resolved these conflicts and look forward to having our first meeting shortly. Thank you for your patience.

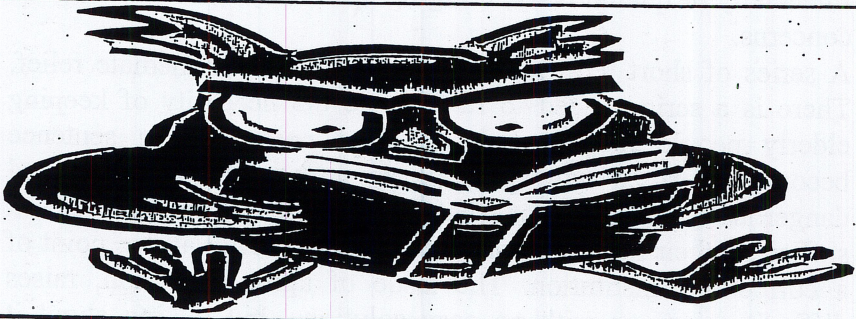
Grey Owls Chairman, Anthony Braun

What is Re-Entry?

Re-entry is a process in which offenders nurture their personal transformation by managing and navigating their incarceration from the very beginning, because you do not want to waste time taking time for granted. Re-entry is active, not passive. It is marked by initiative, self-discovery, trial & error, personal application and by consistently seeking and engaging in positive opportunities for change. The process consists of, the level of understanding of what brought us to our present condition; prison. Acknowledging and accepting responsibility for the unhealthy values and attitudes we had nurtured and the levels of commitment to address those issues I can go on and on, re-entry should be a priority not something that is required to make parole. If you are trying to live a better, more productive life, rather here on the inside or in society, re-entry plays a valuable part in one's way of living. It is not something that we want to take part in, we have to apply it to our everyday way of living.

By Co-Chair: David Marks

Sources: Right-to-Know (May, 2022); Straight Ahead; Prison Health News (June, 2023); FAMM (January, 2023)



Grey Owls - Mission Statement:

We aim to address certain issues pertinent to the more mature members of the elderly community. Through wisdom, fortitude, and resilience, we will seek to advance the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual well being of our members and in doing so benefiting our immediate community.

DISCLAIMER: The material provided in this newsletter is for information purposes and sourced. The Grey Owls cannot offer any legal advice.

GREY OWLS Est. 2020 a Subcommittee of the
Lifer's and Long-Termers Committee

Founder: Anthony Brown, Co-Founder David Marks

Co-Founder: William "Cool Pop" Abbott (Deceased)


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Since 2011