

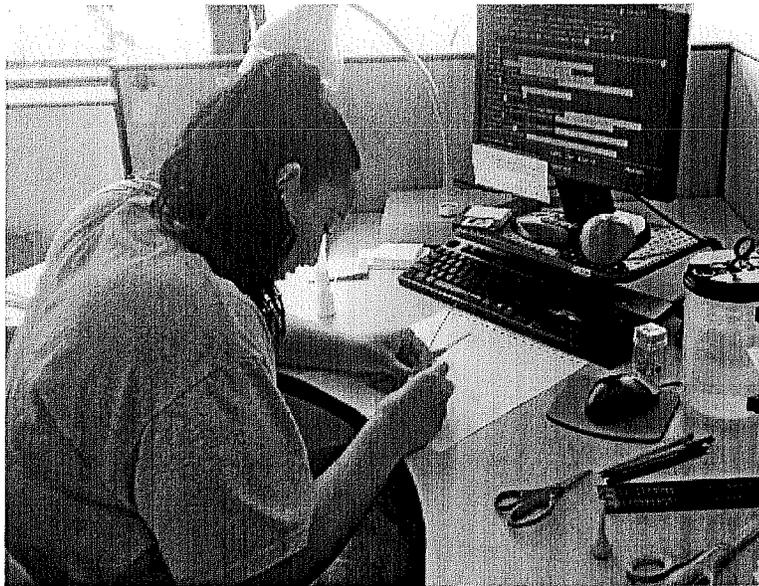


The Daily Communiqué

Braille Team Receives Award from Washington State School of the Blind

By *Rowlanda Cawthon, East Team Leader, Communications*

Braille programs are growing in prisons across the country. They have been developed to address the national shortage of Braille materials for the blind, and to provide educational and job training opportunities to offenders. The Braille Team at the Washington Correction Center for Women (WCCW) was recently recognized for their commitment and accomplishments in this effort.



An offender at Washington Corrections Center for Women transcribes Braille materials. The Braille Team received an award from the Washington State School of the Blind.

WCCW is the only prison in the state that provides professional Braille transcription services. The program, which was established nearly 15 years ago, opens the door for offenders to gain marketable skills in transcribing textbooks, conference materials, newsletters, bills, voter's pamphlets, religious materials and other documents.

Correctional Industries Manager Roy Pidcock said the offender workers understand the importance of the work and are dedicated to providing quality literature to the visually impaired.

"The offenders see value in the Braille program and are committed to the work," Pidcock said. "Every offender in the program is certified. They work long days and spend many of their evenings studying several subjects to gain the necessary knowledge to do the job."

Offenders are hired based on a screening process and evaluation of computer knowledge, academics and behavior. They must pass the Washington's Braille Literacy Usage Exam and Library of Congress Literary Certification. There are also several other certification opportunities that they can pursue to further enhance their skills.

It's the dedication and hard work of the women that resulted in the Braille program receiving 2010-2011 Team of the Year Award from the Washington State School of the Blind (WSSB) said Human Resource Manager Jessica Sydnor who works for the school.

"There are so many reasons why this group deserves the award," Sydnor said. "The pride that these ladies have in their work is humbling. Each and every member of the team truly cares about the quality of their work. They demonstrate the highest level of professionalism and genuine respect for each other and the population they serve."

Most people will never have interaction with the Braille products developed by the offenders. It's the recipients of the services who experience the benefits and have the greatest understanding of the importance of the work. Braille transcription customers include government, non-profit agencies, businesses, schools, hospitals, churches and other community organizations.

"It's easy for us to forget that these women are part of our agency," Sydnor said. "I had the privilege to visit the program for the first time this year, and it's difficult to describe how inspiring it was to see the women in action. We owe recognition to these women and this award is one of the few ways we can show our gratitude for a job well done."

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