

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



*We asked staff to tell us their reason for choosing a career in the Department of Corrections. Staff from every division and department shared the variety of reasons why DOC is a great place to work. From great benefits and amazing co-workers to wanting to make a difference in the lives of others, see what some of our amazing staff had to say. What is your WHY DOC?*

---

As I watched the community I grew up in consumed with crime and drug abuse, I knew I wanted to make a difference. I started at SCI and didn't feel like I was making any notable difference so I joined the team at SCCC. I now help in preparing inmates for reentry and feel as though I am making more of a difference. The Challenge Incarceration Program is a great tool to prevent the revolving door of our prison system.

## **SEAN ANDERSON**

*Sergeant, Division of Adult Institutions*

The interviewers from the DOC stood out to me as we seemed to click from the start. I didn't specifically plan to work for the DOC originally but I grew to love my role and my team right away.

## **VERA BALANDINA**

*Office Operations Associate, Division of Community Corrections*

I had a friend who taught at RCI. He left and went to DMV where I was working. He stayed for a year and went back to teaching at RCI even though the pay was less. Every time I talked to him he said he loved his job and the pay decrease was definitely worth it because he loved going to work every day. That is when I decided to make the switch!

## **ANDREA BAAS**

*Teacher, Division of Adult Institutions*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



I had been in restaurant / catering business my whole life. I was at a point where I would not make any more money or not sure if I would even be able to afford to retire. A friend talked me into applying for a job working in a kitchen for the state. I started in a kitchen and then after a couple of years a Culinary Arts Teacher was retiring and suggested that I apply for his teaching job. I have been in this position for approximately 5 years now and enjoy teaching others how to cook. I feel that if I can make a difference in one person's life, I will change the lives of everyone around them.

## **SHELLY BECHLE**

*Culinary Arts Teacher, Division of Adult Institutions*

Good benefits, retirement, pay and not a physical working job

## **MICHAEL BERNHARDT**

*Correctional Officer, Division of Adult Institutions*

To be able to learn a new trade. Also I worked in food service first becoming a Sergeant to be able to show the PIOC who wanted to learn to take it when they are to be released.

## **BRIAN BURGOON**

*Sergeant, Division of Adult Institutions*

I have always wanted to help people. I worked in nursing homes as a certified nursing assistant and felt that I was not meant for that. I came across an ad in the paper for the Department of Corrections and thought why not. I did that 14 years ago and never looked back. Helping to educate the patients that I come in contact with daily is refreshing. To know that there is a team of people that are working toward the safety of the PIOC and the general public is an amazing feeling. The DOC has been a vital part of my path in my career. I have felt supported and encouraged by all the of team members around me along the way. The team members all have diverse backgrounds and there is so much to learn daily. I have made friends and gained a family through my career in the Department of Corrections.

## **JENNIFER BURNS**

*Nurse Clinician 2, Division of Adult Institutions*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



I wanted to give back to the community. I have so much to be grateful for and wanted to expand how I help others.

## **MARY CONNER-MENAREK**

*Social Worker/AODA credentials, Division of Adult Institutions*

I left my former job to come to DOC due to the retirement and health benefits for my family. My retirement prior was nonexistent, and out of pocket expenses for my twins was astronomical.

## **JENNIFER COUSINEAU**

*Office Records Supervisor, Division of Adult Institutions*

I initially began this career to work with juveniles, as I worked previously with the Milwaukee Public School system, and found that I received a great response when working with trouble youth. At the time, I was recruited out of the academy to RCI. With time I realized that my approach as an officer was effective, and I was able to build and withstand the rapport that I have today with the PIOC, so much so, that I was fortunate enough to expand my horizons, and promote in January 2021 to Sergeant. Although many view this career as very thankless, I enjoy what I do. Being able to earn the respect and compliance through the skills that I have absorbed throughout my career has been very rewarding.

## **SARAH DOMIANI**

*Sergeant, Division of Adult Institutions*

I chose a career in the Department of Corrections because all I have ever wanted to do was to help others and probation and parole agents have a very complex, and often difficult job; but if done with the right intentions and the passion to help people, you can change their lives.

## **TANYA DOWNS**

*Probation and Parole Agent, Division of Community Corrections*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



For a teacher, the autonomy to execute instruction is a gift. I attest that the overall professionalism and, I dare say, care of management is stellar.

## **TODD EHLERS**

*Teacher, Division of Adult Institutions*

Our work in Probation and Parole doesn't make regular media headlines. What we do as impactful public servants occurs behind the scenes as we make our communities safer, restore victim's sense of wholeness, and help our clients become better neighbors, family members, and people. I chose to work with Wisconsin DOC as after working in corrections in two other Midwestern states, I knew the most professional growth and opportunity to change those clients I worked with would be fostered in Wisconsin. The caliber of coworkers, administration, and team members has been incredible over the years. Having known how other organizations miss in their chances to do better, I was impressed and keen on being part of the growth and impact of evidence based practices throughout our department. Part of the reason I am staying with WI DOC through my next 10 years is to see how greatly we make Wisconsin a better, safer, impactful place for the next generation.

## **MIKE FELTON**

*Corrections Field Supervisor, Division of Community Corrections*

The short answer is that after college I really needed a job. At the time I was hired, I was about to get married and needed a job to support myself and my wife. Over 23 years later, I have gotten so much more - I have a career. Serving the State of Wisconsin in my various positions over my career with the DOC has been one of the best decisions of my life, second to marrying my wife who has also stood by my side from the beginning.

## **ROBERT FUGATE**

*Corrections Program Specialist - Sex Offender Registry, Division of Community Corrections*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



I was at a job for 18 years, one day I was told no one is getting fired, we are restructuring; you have 6 months to find a new job. I took the State Librarian test with a coworker. A previous coworker put me in touch with the Librarian from RCI. She told me they were building a new youth prison and needed a librarian. I applied and I have been blessed to work at RYOCF for 22 years.

## **KAY GEORGE**

*Librarian, Division of Adult Institutions*

After earning a BA in Communication, I wanted to work with professional, college-degreed public employees. Corrections was my 1st choice because it is a real community-based agency. I was prepared to work with the public and trained to manage difficult conversations with certified training in Conflict Resolution. I immediately employed skilled use of knowledgeable devices like Active Listening, Need Based resolution negotiating, and Trauma Based Awareness. I made a great choice and dedicate my approach to giving clients a calm positive presence as their 1st DOC contact. The role of this work is very important to provide Field Office agents and Supervisors the information and history to determine risk assessment and the assignment most suitable to the client's needs and likely successful outcomes. I am a part of the essential treatment of a client's Criminologic thinking and behavior choices. We all are here to make positive changes and directions in their lives.

## **BILL GILLESPIE**

*Office Operations Associate, Division of Community Corrections*

Because of the benefits, great hours, and wonderful work environment.

## **BRIAN GRIFFIN**

*Correctional Officer 2, Division of Adult Institutions*

It is the people. When I was interviewing in 2011, across most state agencies, the quality of the people at DOC stood out. The caliber of the interviewers and the excellent questions left me impressed. Since then I have enjoyed the camaraderie of the DOC's Central Office: bright, open and helpful. The staff has a focus and drive at the DOC that makes it a great place to work.

## **NATHAN HARPER**

*Office of Records Management Director, Division of Management Services*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONS WEEK



I believe that education opens hearts and minds, to new ways of thinking, new points of view, and opportunities for personal and professional growth. I chose a career with the DOC as a way to give back and use my experiences and expertise in education to motivate the PIOC and assist them in acquiring the tools/skills they need to live up to their potential.

## JACQUELINE E. HARRIS

*ABE Teacher, Division of Adult Institutions*

Well, the reason I chose a job in the DOC is because I just needed a job at the time. However, I chose to stay with the DOC because the work is enjoyable and rewarding, and my coworkers are amazing!

## MEAGAN HARRIS

*Office Operations Associate, Division of Community Corrections*

I genuinely wanted to help persons in our care and clients get through some of the biggest hurdles in their lives. Since I was a teenager, I wanted to be a Probation and Parole Agent. While I was pursuing my Bachelor's Degree, I started working as a Correctional Officer thinking it would be the best way to develop my professional communication skills. Now I train new and veteran staff and I tell people that when I am training, every day feels like a vacation because I am surrounded by so many great people doing what makes me happy!

## GARRETT HRUBESCH

*Staff Development Program Specialist Senior, Division of Management Services*

I chose to work in the DOC because I am able to work in and with different areas of social work all in one place. We work with mental health and AODA as well as working with different sectors in the community for our clients to either help to connect them to resources or to assist them in other release planning tasks. I did my college internship with the DOC and was hired right after I graduated. I appreciated the level of experience I got on a daily basis and the opportunities to use my skills. Every day is different.

## KATIE K. JOHNSON

*AODA Social Worker, Division of Adult Institutions*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



I completed an undergraduate internship with the department and really enjoyed working with the population. When I finished school and was looking for full time employment, the DOC was the first place I looked. I have been here for 14 years, and I still enjoy working with the population.

## **AMY KARN**

*Psychologist-Licensed, Division of Adult Institutions*

I've always had a desire to work in a rehabilitative environment where I have the opportunity to help people turn their lives around; put my skills and experience to good use and also work in an environment that is challenging and rewarding and where no two days are ever the same.

## **ARTHUR KENNEDY**

*Corrections Program Supervisor, Division of Adult Institutions*

20 years ago I thought I could make a difference in my community and I hope to at least one person, I did.

## **KELLY KINCAID**

*Corrections Program Specialist, Division of Community Corrections*

I joined State Government in 2007 because I wanted to continue to serve after retiring from the Army. I chose DOC because I felt my skills could be put to work helping to make the lives of Wisconsinites better. Both those inside and outside our institutions. My Brother was incarcerated several times over a 25 year period. He would talk about how great the CO's were but that the facilities and services needed work. After my Brother passed away I decided I wanted to have a direct impact on making things better. This job helps me do that.

## **STEFANOS KRALLIS**

*Bureau of Budget and Facilities Management Director, Division of Management Services*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



At the time I was working in roofing and needed more stability with hours. A few of my friends worked for the DOC and it was really the benefits package that helped make the decision.

## **JOSH KRATOCHVIL**

*Facilities Maintenance Specialist Advanced, Division of Adult Institutions*

I have previously worked in Human and Social Services Departments and being a part of the Juvenile Justice System for about 20 years. I have made connections with person's in the DOC and JOC over the years and have found a very sound connection. In my experiences with DOC and JOC, and Law Enforcement Officials, Probation and Parole Agencies, there is a common bond that drives each person to be motivated in promoting Safety and Justice to the Public and our own Communities. We have families to protect, and we care about others that we work with on a daily basis, the DOC works for all of us!

## **DOUGLAS KROKSTROM**

*Social Worker, Division of Adult Institutions*

I grew up in the city of Milwaukee and attended Milwaukee Public Schools. I had many very good friends, that were very good people, that made very bad decisions. I always hoped that they would get help so that the good things they offered to me as a friend and to their families could positively impact their communities. I understood the need to punish them, but hoped when they were away (detention, jail, hospital) that they would have effective and caring people to help guide them successfully. Early in life I dreamed of being that person to someone someday.

## **AUTUMN LACY**

*Assistant Administrator, Division of Community Corrections*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



In order to gain experience in the criminal justice system and to protect and serve the people of Wisconsin. The DOC has allowed me to improve my leadership abilities, increase my knowledge of criminal justice, and given me the opportunity to improve the lives of those in our care. I take pride in being a part of the best Department of Corrections in the world.

## **BRADLEY LEWIN**

*Sergeant, Division of Adult Institutions*

I love getting to work on computers to help everyone else perform their duties by keeping their systems running, and what better place to do that at than our State's Department of Corrections. Getting to help the PIOC attend schooling and work programs, to getting to help the P&P agents help their clients, the Institution Staff keep working smoothly, and helping other BTM staff with their duties. This means we get to help in every aspect of the DOC. It really helps make me feel like I am making a difference.

## **KAREN LITTLE**

*Technical Services Senior, Help Desk, Division of Management Services*

The benefits are exceptional. Especially the WRS. The facility is also close to home.

## **NATALIE MAURER**

*Payroll and Benefits Specialist, Division of Adult Institutions*

I chose DOC because its mission has always been to protect the public and to offer opportunities for positive change. Its purpose, if you will, parallels my own. As a mother, daughter, granddaughter, and DOC employee, I desire to protect my family, our community and to offer opportunities that positively shape generations to come.

## **JENNIFER MILLARD-SCHMITZ**

*Corrections Program Supervisor, Division of Adult Institutions*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



Living in and working for the state is, in my opinion, one way to contribute to the overall success of Wisconsin. I am proud to say I work for Wisconsin in the DOC.

## **SCOTT MILLER**

*Food Service Administrator, Division of Adult Institutions*

When I finished graduate school in 1998, I had a family of five to support. I badly needed a job and the Department of Corrections (DOC) offered me one. They took a chance on me, even though I had not set out or even thought about working with the persons we serve in the DOC. However, I stayed with the DOC. I made it my career even though I could have moved on to something else. I did so, because I came to realize it is an important and meaningful way for me to serve others. I have had advantages given to me that the persons in our care have never had. Working in the DOC allows me to use my skills to serve men and women who often are the least likely in our society to receive such services. Providing services to our people has unexpectedly turned out to be a meaningful way to give to individuals who are underserved but need services so much.

## **JOHN MORRELL**

*Psychologist, Division of Community Corrections*

I did not choose the DOC, the DOC chose me. I was fresh out of college and looking for a job. After a year of substitute teaching and futile job interviews, I heard about an LTE position teaching at Lincoln Hills. I interviewed and got the LTE position, which turned into a full-time position five months later. I still took a few interviews over the next year, but the only place that gave me a chance was Lincoln Hills. And 30 years later, I am still here.

## **JOSEPH OLBRANTZ**

*Teacher, Division of Juvenile Corrections*

I was a social worker for 17 years and switched to DCC. I choose a career because it sounded interesting when they sent a letter to my house that they had vacancies.

## **ROBERTA PACKARD**

*Probation and Parole Agent, Division of Community Corrections*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



For as long as I can remember, I had an urge to serve our country in some way or another. I first committed myself to the army and served honorably until discharge. To continue my service, I chose corrections as a means to serve my community and my state.

## **JON PALMER**

*Correctional Officer, Division of Adult Institutions*

Back in 1991 I worked for Waupun Memorial Hospital. At the time Beaver Dam, St Agnes and Ripon hospitals were all expanding. I felt they would eat up Waupun Memorial. My husband worked for the State at DCI so I began applying for positions. I started with the State Elections Boards in Madison, transferred to DCI transitioned through A&E, KMCI School, DCI Primary care and finally finding a home in DCI Records. My dream job.

## **KAREN PARENTEAU**

*Offender Records Supervisor, Division of Adult Institutions*

I chose a career with DOC because I wanted to help individuals make positive changes in their lives. I do believe that people make mistakes and deserve second chances.

## **ASHLEY RIDER**

*Probation and Parole Agent Senior, Division of Community Corrections*

I wanted a career in the criminal justice field.

## **CODY SAYLOR**

*Sergeant, Division of Adult Institutions*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



I did an LTE position with DJC and that got me interested in the DOC, mainly the DCC.

## **MOLLY SCHOUWEILER**

*Office Operations Associate, Division of Community Corrections*

Moved to WI from out of state and needed a job when I got here. Decided the DOC was a decent paying career with plenty of advancement opportunities and job security.

## **ERIC SHARP**

*Correctional Officer, Division of Adult Institutions*

I enjoy working with people and helping people. I also enjoy doing investigations and helping out other agents whenever I can.

## **MICHAEL SHUTTLEWORTH**

*Probation and Parole Agent, Division of Community Corrections*

I chose to work with the Dept of Corrections as I enjoy Public Service work. This gives me a chance to support Central Office as well as all of our Agencies. Which in turn helps our staff to support the PIOC.

## **DIANE SIMONIS**

*Fleet Specialist/Risk OOA, Division of Management Services*

I needed a better career path and a big part of choosing this job was the benefits and retirement you get for working for the state.

## **JAMES SOSSONG**

*Correctional Officer, Division of Adult Institutions*

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



I took Administrative Class at a tech school and our teacher told us about a test. I took the test and began employment once my boys went off to school.

## **LOIS STODOLA**

*Program Support Supervisor, Division of Community Corrections*

I have always been interested in helping people; I just didn't know what direction I wanted to take. Here at the DOC, I have found a place where I feel like the work that I am doing is making a difference in someone else's life. And when I get up to the pearly gates, God will not have to ask me what I did with my time on Earth; he will just invite me right in because my goal is to try to leave this world a better place than what I found it. It's so important to find your purpose in life and I feel like I have found mine here at the DOC.

## **BETH STONEY**

*Treatment Specialist, Division of Adult Institutions*

Working with adult students that want to learn is so rewarding. I feel that education will help them plan for release in a positive and realistic way.

## **VICTORIA SVITAVSKY**

*Marshland School Teacher, Division of Adult Institutions*

I chose this purposeful career because I grew up in a single parent household. The three years I have been at the Grow academy, most of the youth come from a single parent household or no parent household, some living with grandparents. My mother raised myself and my two sibling by herself working a full time job and staying late a few times a week. My oldest brother watching over us on her late nights and weekends. I knew she was trying her best because we also moved in with family and moved homes a lot the first few years our father left us. One thing for sure, she kept tabs on us, made sure we went to school and that we came home right after school. She asked who are friends were and what we were up to. I know if I didn't have a mother that raised us with strict rules and always staying on top of us, I would have gone down the other road and been in trouble. That is a fact. I grew up in New York City, a very busy and most places that are not a good influence place to grow up. I owe it all to my mother. I chose this position because I can empathize with some of the youth that have come through here and continue to. After High school I joined the military, serving 21 years. I was

# WHY DOC?

#WICORRECTIONSWEEK



successful because of my up-bringing and I also had mentors as a young Marine that screamed at me, corrected me, and most of all gave me second chances in correcting myself and improving before writing me up as a counseling or demoted my military rank which could of affected the rest of my career. As I got older I understood and felt thankful for the many second chances I received. I believe this position I hold is special and not all can be a youth counselor. It takes a lot of patience with the youth in getting to know who they are, where they come from to honestly understand them and mostly seeing the potential each of them really have. I also work with a great team. We have been together for 3 years, others longer but like I mentioned this is a purposeful job. The purpose is to gain the trust of the boys that come through here and let them know that we are here to make them successful in this program and believe in them.

## **ILEIN TAIPE**

*Youth Counselor at the Grow Academy, Division of Juvenile Corrections*

After serving my country I wanted a career that I could still protect my family and loved ones and at the same time hopefully change a few lives in the people in our care.

## **ANDRE TILLMAN**

*Sergeant, Division of Adult Institutions*

To work in a multidisciplinary field to provide services and treat to PIOC. To have the ability to grow professionally in the areas that I find best for myself.

## **ANDREA UHERKA**

*Senior Social Worker, Division of Adult Institutions*

I chose the DOC to show PIOC the opportunities and skills that can be acquired while working in the trades. Leave the institution a better place.

## **BRIAN VERBRACKEN**

*Plumber, Division of Adult Institutions*