

Being creative is now a crime in the Utah State Prison System. The prison's New Years resolution for 2015 is to take away the inmates creative ingenuity and a way to make some money for their families.

The guards were ordered in January to go into all the inmate's cells and take away any and all hobby crafts except for ones that can be purchased through the prison commissary and it is rumored that crochet and art supplies will be limited. What's next, books on self improvement?

Inmates who have no money and are considered indigent have to rely on a creative mind and come up with ways to help pass the time without spending money in the prison commissary. Their only options are to use the things that are considered garbage, such as empty potato chip bags and other trash that are left after every meal.

With a little imagination and some crafty engineering the inmates can pass their time using their minds in a positive direction and are able to send home uniquely built one of a kind art, and there is no doubt that some of the items that are created is art.

The time consuming process can take an inmate anywhere from two to four months for just one handsomely crafted heart shaped jewelry box. There are thousands of hand folded individual pieces that are molded and intertwined to make just one jewelry box. It is not just boxes. They can make such things as wishing wells with moving buckets, rocking chairs, bird houses and stage coaches with horses.

For those inmates who can't afford a radio or a TV or buy yarn and learn to crochet or unfortunately have a hard time reading a good book they're hands and minds are handcuffed.

The guards who were ordered by their superiors and they were ordered the powers above even admitted they felt bad and were only following orders when they had to round up thousands of hours of masterful and ingenious art work and throw it all away back into the trash. Some ready to be sent home to loved ones.

The powers of justice move slowly and in this case it eludes rational thinking. Idle hands breed idle minds. When an inmate is not occupied with positive projects or directions the consequences affect everyone in the prison and only breeds more discontent.

The correctional facility is losing perspective of what correctional means.

Some of the inmates are so accomplished at creating these unique pieces of art that they are able to send home to be sold for good money. The money can be used to help the families of the incarcerated men and women and also help them build pride and self-esteem.

I know firsthand the positive affect that comes from pursuing art and doing something creative from caste off items. Not only do I crochet hand crafted and designed one of a kind blankets and throws that I have sent home for family and friends and to offer for sale. I have also wrote two books that have been published while I have been locked up. And the self respect that that builds in me is going to help me when I am released and have to fight my alcoholism outside these walls. The best part is it makes me feel good and that is not always easy when you are behind bars and they throw up road blocks at every corner.

I must say on behalf of the prison they do have programs that let the inmates pursue positive activities after you earn that freedom. But any money made goes to the prison to use however they want, company parties and such. Not a penny goes to the individual who made the cedar hope chest or the end tables. Some of that money should go to the inmate or their families or restitution to the victim of their crimes.

If the prison officials were really interested in defining the word correctional they would sit down with a handpicked group of inmates and discuss ways to help and improve the running of the prison. The bye product could be a lower recidivism and less tax payer money being wasted. As inmates we have a perspective that is never looked at. No one cares what we think, all I can say is not all inmates are complete losers. Go to Amazon, books on Kindle and check out "80 Years in One Day " or "Life Inside a Bottle" and draw your conclusions.

Please don't see this as a convict lashing out at the prison who wronged him. The truth is coming to prison quite possibly saved my life.

If you can send a copy of this back it would be very much appreciated

Its hard to get things typed in here.

Thank You