

INSIGHT INTO THE IMPACTS OF THE SUSTAINABILITY IN PRISONS  
PROJECT'S WESTERN POND TURTLE PROGRAMS ON THE WORK  
ENVIRONMENT OF WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
PRISON STAFF

by

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## ABSTRACT

Insight into the Impacts of the Sustainability in Prisons Projects' Western Pond Turtle Programs on the Work Environment of Washington State Department of Corrections  
Prison Staff

Sadie Gilliom

Imagine working in an environment where you were surrounded by grey walls, razor wire and hundreds of people you were responsible for, some who could become violent. Thinking about this work environment may increase your stress level. Correctional staff have been shown to have high stress levels, which impacts their overall wellbeing and thus has the potential to impact their work ethic and how they treat the residents living in the prison. Contact with nature in the form of animals and plants has been shown to increase the overall wellbeing of people. The Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) brings nature in the form of animals and plants into prisons. In one animal based SPP program, called the Western Pond Turtle (WPT) program, endangered turtles are rehabilitated by trained prison residents and released back into the wild. This thesis examines the impacts of the turtle program at Larch (Larch) and Cedar Creek Corrections Center (Cedar Creek) on the work environment of correctional staff. The results of the interviews indicate these programs have an overall positive impact on the work environment of correctional staff through increased job satisfaction, decreased stress, and increased prosocial behavior. Although the program had positive impacts overall, not everyone in the prison is accepting of the program and there is much room for improvement. This includes reducing the workload of the program, improving all round communication, and taking a critical look at the scale of the programs versus the media attention they attract. The potential for programs like the turtle program to positively impact the work environment of correctional staff is clear, but a follow up quantitative study comparing the staff members' program involvement, before and after, in a variety of different SPP programs should be pursued in order to clarify how nature programs effectively improve the work environment and lower the stress of correctional staff.

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### **Disclosure Statement**

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Washington Department of Corrections and The Evergreen State College. The author of this research is a volunteer program evaluator and was not assigned this research task by the Washington State Department of Corrections or the Sustainability in Prisons Project (a partnership between The Evergreen State College and the Washington State Department of Corrections).

### **About the Author: A Reflection**

Every person has biases based on their life experiences. This includes every researcher. I feel it is important for the researcher to acknowledge any biases, self-reflect on those biases and inform the reader. This allows the reader to understand the perspective the research is being approached from. It also allows the reader to understand the steps the author went through to acknowledge their biases and understand the possible impacts of how the author either embraced and/or overcame them.

Before I go on to explain my perspective going into this research, I want to address one blatant bias in this research. As an employee of the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP), one may think this provides a bias to the research which cannot be overcome. On the contrary, I feel this is a great advantage in this research. All of the interview participants in this study were familiar with me through my work with SPP and I had gained rapport with them. They could relate to me because I worked in the same prison they do and at the same time I was viewed as an outside party because I am not a typical prison employee. Therefore I was familiar and possibly considered less intimidating than if one of their co-workers or a complete outsider was interviewing them. I also feel that I have a better understanding of what staff view as important and what might impact the results of the interviews because of my work in the prison environment. This allows me to gain access to more and better data. If your interviewees trust you to keep their information confidential, they will share more information with you.

The following is a description of my personal perspective as a result of my life experiences and my current work with the Sustainability in Prisons Project as the program coordinator for the Western Pond Turtle Program.

Growing up in Washington State surrounded by wilderness, I spent my childhood hiking, catching frogs, watching birds, building forts and foraging for wild berries and mushrooms. Nature is a place to retreat, find solitude and play. However, nature can also be something to fear. Volcanoes, earthquakes and extreme weather kill thousands of people each year. These complexities of nature can be used to understand our lives. Like a rainbow after a thunderstorm, there is always beauty, even in the most adverse times.

People in prison can relate to these complexities of life, as it is often a complicated and challenging life that brings people to prison. Prisons can be filled with feelings of guilt, fear, stress, anxiety, depression, disassociation, suffering, anger and manipulation. This brings about a negative energy that relays out to the atmosphere of the entire facility. In other words, it is not just the prisoners who are impacted, it is potentially everyone- including the families that visit, the staff members who work there on a daily basis and the communities where the previously incarcerated people are released to.

On the other hand, prison can also be a place of rehabilitation. In the prisons I have worked at, in Washington State, there is community, friendship, redemption, learning, self discovery and love. Like the complexities found in nature, there is negativity and positivity in these prison settings. However, the negative often outweighs the positive. The key to nature's beauty is balance; the balance between birth and death, destruction and growth, all of the organisms in an ecosystem supporting each other in a

complex web of life, and a balance of energy - as it can neither be created nor destroyed.

There will always be negativity in a prison, as the negative aspects of life are what got people there and dealing with these aspects of life is part of the rehabilitation process.

The key to a healthy prison environment, like the key to a healthy natural environment, is balancing negativity with positivity to create the healthiest and most rehabilitative environment as possible for everyone. This can also be referred to as creating a sustainable environment—one that does not fall into one side or the other, but keeps a balance.

When nature is balanced and sustainable, it is healthy. Understanding this can help one to understand the need for sustainability in one's own life. In this way, nature can be used as a form of rehabilitation inside a prison and can promote balance in the general atmosphere of the prison. Through their endangered species conservation programs, the Sustainability in Prisons Project - a partnership between The Evergreen State College and the Washington Department of Corrections - has the potential to do this.

Embracing the fact that human action can be destructive enough to put an entire population of a species at the brink of extinction and choosing to counteract those actions empowers people to make a difference-bringing about positivity and hope in the face of extinction. This power of individual action to make positive change is just the beginning. Once one can acknowledge the power of individual action, one opens the door to embracing the greater power of community action.

Through the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP), incarcerated people, trained as residents in the program, care for endangered turtles in two prisons in Washington

State, in an attempt to help bring the species back from the face of extinction. The residents in the program are exposed to an imbalance and are given the opportunity to play a role in bringing nature back into balance. They are contributing to the recovery of a species and are given an opportunity to relay this recovery to their own lives. They are also given a quiet space to work - away from the general population of the prison - and a multitude of practical skills and experiences that can be used to obtain a job and gain college credit. I believe this positivity ripples out to other incarcerated people, their families, prison media - although this can be seen as green washing at times, and the staff working in the prison. (For more on greenwashing, please refer to the section on green washing in the 'Constructive Criticism' section under 'Results'.)

Understanding the balance of nature and its ecosystems and assisting in the recovery of an endangered species is the bigger picture of these programs. I believe we also have to acknowledge the relationships being built between the animals involved in the programs and the residents in the program. Personally, I find great joy in rescuing and rehabilitating sick, injured and homeless animals. I have rehabilitated a wide variety of injured and sick animals from frogs and turtles to goats and bald eagles. My experiences with these animals helped make me into the person I am. There is something healing in being able to make a sick or injured animal healthy again; especially animals that are able to be released back into the wild.

Such experience in nurturing increases empathy; not just towards animals, but also towards people. Empathy is an invaluable and rehabilitative ability for incarcerated people to gain in prison. Empathy allows one to take a step back and put oneself in someone else's shoes. I believe this has the potential to increase prosocial behaviors in



the prison setting and could contribute to the building of healthy relationships inside and outside of prison.

I am not just talking about incarcerated people, but also the staff who are involved in the programs. Some correctional staff are able to participate in educational opportunities, handling the animals and releasing the animals back into their natural environment. Staff who have the opportunity to work with the residents in the program on a regular basis may be able to gain some of the benefits of working with animals and nature. Prisons are based on a system of hierarchy and control. Staff and prisoners do not typically work together. Correctional staff working in SPP programs have the unique experience of working collaboratively with incarcerated people. Due to the above factors, I believe these programs positively impact the overall atmosphere of the prisons. On the other hand, I also understand that there are issues with workload and staff shortage in the prison facility. If the programs take up too much of staff time, they could have a negative impact on the atmosphere of the facility.

Another benefit to working with animals is their ability to reduce stress.

Domestic pets and other animals, such as turtles, have shown to reduce stress through handling and petting. I believe the mere act of interacting with the animals in these programs may reduce stress in the people directly involved and this positive energy may be passed on to co-workers and peers.

On the other hand, I am also aware of the stressors involved in animal care and rehabilitation. Being responsible for the life and wellbeing of an animal, especially an endangered animal, is a feeling I have a great deal of experience with. It is both rewarding and scary. One worries constantly: "Are the animals OK? Should I check on

them one more time before I leave? Am I sure I locked that door properly?" The correctional staff involved in the endangered species programs in prison may not feel this direct sense of responsibility for the animals, since the residents in the program are the animal caretakers. However, those staff directly involved in the programs may feel the stress of making sure the residents in the program are doing their jobs.

In addition to my experience and views on nature and animals, I have always had a fascination with the human mind and a particular interest in understanding why there are underserved populations in society and how to reach them. I have a deep compassion and empathy for people who have been overlooked or who struggle with fitting into the societal norms. Part of the reason for this is because I can relate, on some level, being a young female bodied, gender nonconforming person who is not always accepted or welcomed by those around me. Another part is that I have loved ones who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. These interests and personal ties with mental health have motivated me to help people who are struggling with their wellbeing.

Prison is well known to be a stressful living environment. However, a not as widely acknowledged fact is that prison is also a stressful work environment. Through working in prisons, I have witnessed some of the stressors and the results of the stress that correctional staff experience. The wellbeing of the correctional staff is not only important for them and their families, but also important for the safety of the prison and the incarcerated people living there. The Sustainability in Prisons Project's Western Pond Turtle Program is one example of a program that is capable of improving the work environment of the prisons and reducing the stress of the correctional staff.

All of the above beliefs, perspectives that have come from my life experiences,

especially my experiences working for the Sustainability in Prisons Project as the Western Pond Turtle Program Coordinator, have led me to have obvious biases to this research on the impacts of these endangered species programs on the work environment of correctional staff. These biases have both benefitted me and challenged me in my research and I hope you will find that I address these biases in a satisfactory manner throughout this thesis - especially in the development of my methods and the analysis of my interviews. Despite and because of these biases, I think you will find the results of this research to be an important first step in understanding how nature and animals can be used to improve the work environment of correctional staff and the safety and rehabilitative environment of prisons.

### **Introduction**

A heavy door clicks and you enter a yard surrounded by 3 rows of razor wire and grey walls. You walk past hundreds of people all dressed the same. You are in charge of these people. If any violence breaks out, it is your responsibility to help stop it. Do you feel stressed? Stress experienced by correctional staff has been of particular concern and has been well researched. Stress in the prison work environment has been shown to cause high blood pressure (Morgan, 2009; Graham, 2013), depression (Liu Liu et al, 2013), post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Spinaris et al, 2012), domestic violence (Valentine, Oehme and Martin, 2012), high turnover rates (Finn, 2000; Morgan, 2009), substance abuse (Lambert, Kelley and Hogan, 2013; Spinaris et al, 2013) and a decrease in safety due to a decrease in work quality (Finn, 2000). This lengthy list points to an urgent need to reduce the stress of correctional staff in order to increase the safety of

prisons, the morale of the facilities and the wellbeing of the correctional staff and the residents they interact with.

There have been varying attempts to reduce stress in correctional staff (Finn et al, 2000; McCraty et al, 2009; Schwartz and Levitas, 2012). Attempts have ranged from adding anonymous counseling programs (Finn, 2000) to partnering with a non-profit that brings a professional training program into the prison to teach officers how to deal with stress before it happens (Finn, 2000; McCraty et al, 2009). These programs have all been successful to some degree, but the programs lack uniformity between prisons (Finn, 2000). Funding issues and short-staffing prevent many prisons from adopting more intensive training programs and can only provide counseling services after a stressful event has occurred (Finn, 2000; McCraty et al, 2009). Investigation into ways the overall work environment can be made less stressful without added expenses and staff time is imperative.

The addition of nature, in the form of plants and wildlife, to the prison environment may be one potential way to reduce stress. However, the impact of introducing nature into the correctional staff's work environment has scarcely been researched. One unpublished doctorate thesis by Waitkus in 2004, asked correctional officers how a new garden in the San Quentin State Prison impacted them. This study focused on the impacts the garden had on incarcerated people, but one of the staff members did report a decrease in stress due to the inmates being busier and less likely to get into trouble. This points to the possibility of nature programs improving the work environment of correctional staff.

Outside of prison, nature, defined as plants and/or forests, has been shown to

increase overall wellbeing (Kaplan and Kaplan; 1995) and decrease anxiety in the workplace (Chang and Chen, 2005). Nature has also been shown to increase prosocial behavior (Weinstein et al, 2009; Zhang et al, 2014) which may have an effect on relationships in the work environment.

Inside of prisons, nature defined as animals, has been shown to be correlated with lowering recidivism rates in dog and horse programs (Myers et al, 2004). Dog programs specifically have been said to increase self-esteem, provide job skills and reduce costs to prisons as a response to reduced recidivism rates (Myers et al, 2004). The impact of these programs on correctional staff has yet to be addressed directly. One can ponder on the possible stress reduction of seeing fewer inmates return, but more research must be done.

Outside of prison, dogs have been shown to decrease the feeling of loneliness (Banks & Banks, 2002), increase prosocial behavior (Beetz et al, 2012; Jackson, 2010), reduce stress and anxiety (Barker & Dawson, 1998; Lass-Hennemann et al, 2014; ) lower blood pressure (Beetz et al, 2012), decrease symptoms in psychiatric patients (Beetz et al 2012), and decrease cortisol levels (Odendaal, 2000). Much less research has been carried out on the impacts of other animals. A few studies have been done on the impact of the relationship between zoo visitors and zoo animals. This relationship has been shown to increase interest in conservation and sense of connectedness to nature (Clayon, Fraser & Saunders, 2008), and one study showed that viewing zoo animals increased feelings of beauty, respect and wonder (Myers et al, 2004). The above research shows that relationships with animals have the potential to increase wellbeing, but what about the less researched animals, such as the turtles that will be the focus of this study? The

research is limited. Only one study of particular interest to this research was found that shows equal and significant anxiety reduction between petting and holding rabbits and petting and holding turtles (Shiloh, Sorek and Terkel, 2003).

The Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) provides the opportunity to examine the relationship between nature, defined as wildlife and plants, and correctional staff.

SPP is a partnership between The Evergreen State College (TESC) and the Washington State Department of Corrections (WADOC) that brings nature into prisons. This ever growing partnership now has sustainability programs in all 12 prisons in Washington State and is spreading in the US and internationally. Previous studies of programs like these have focused on the skills the inmates have gained from the programs and if the programs affect recidivism rates. Very few studies have investigated the impacts of animal and plant programs on the DOC prison staff. Understanding these impacts will bring insight into how SPP programs may affect staff, secondarily to inmates. In addition, these insights will lead to the knowledge of how SPP programs may be used or adjusted in order to positively impact the wellbeing of correctional staff and thus increase the safety of the prison environment.

This study focuses on the investigation of whether or not and how particular programs of SPP, specifically the Western Pond Turtle (WPT) programs, impact the work environment and relationships in the work environment of correctional staff. This study reveals new ways to increase wellbeing in this stress susceptible job, spread the popularity of programs like these and informs SPP on areas for potential improvement.

The findings motivate a step in the right direction in decreasing stress and in turn, increasing the safety and wellbeing of the prison staff and the prison as a whole.

In order to answer the following research question, I interviewed correctional staff involved in a western pond turtle program at Larch Corrections Center (Larch) and a western pond turtle program at Cedar Creek Corrections Center (Cedar Creek). My question was, do SPP's Western Pond Turtle Programs impact the work environment of WADOC Prison staff? If so, how do these programs impact staff wellbeing, prosocial behavior and relationships between staff and inmates, and the general atmosphere of the facility?

Now, allow me to take you on an adventure through the background research in order to lead you to some insight into the importance of this thesis research. This will leave you with a better understanding of correctional staff wellbeing, impacts of plants and animals on humans in situations outside of prisons, the particular nature and animal programs that are currently going on inside of prisons and finally the particulars of the WPT programs at Larch and Cedar Creek Corrections Centers. This background research enlightens the reader on how the turtle program might impact the correctional staff and thus will be a helpful guide through the results of this thesis.

## **Literature Review**

### **Stress and the Prison Environment**

Correctional staff members have the heavy responsibility of keeping the safety and security of prisons for themselves, their co-workers and the incarcerated people in their care. The responsibility of so many people alone could place stress on an individual. Add the impacts of working in the atmosphere of a prison and the imminent threat of violence and the stressors compound. The stressors involved in working in a prison have been shown to impact staff wellbeing. Without wellbeing, how are the prison employees

expected to be able to keep the safety and security of prisons effectively? This problem is well known and therefore, in 2000, the National Department of Justice (NDJ) created a summary of the causes, impacts and potential solutions to stress in the correctional work environment (Finn, 2000). The NDJ having interest and putting resources into creating such a review shows the importance of this issue.

In the review from the NDJ, Finn identified the major causes of stress as inmate violence, inmate manipulation of staff, coworker conflict, negative media attention, poor pay, too much overtime and sexual harassment. Lambert, Hogan and Altheimer in 2010 also identified work-family conflict as a contributing factor. They showed family issues at home can cause stress at work and too much overtime can cause additional stress because of limitation of family time.

These stressors have been shown to contribute to high blood pressure (Finn, 2000; Graham, 2013; Morgan, 2009), high turnover rates (Finn, 2000; Morgan, 2009), domestic violence (Valentine, Oehme and Martin, 2012) increased amount of sick leave taken (Finn, 2000; Morgan, 2009), drug and alcohol abuse (Lambert, Kelley and Hogan, 2013; Spinaris et al, 2012), and job burnout (Lambert, Hogan and Altheimer, 2010; Lambert, Kelley and Hogan, 2013). In other words, the high stress work environment can be detrimental to the physical and emotional health of the correctional staff. This decrease in wellbeing can also lead to poor work quality, which, in turn, can lead to decreased prison safety (Finn, 2000).

In addition, long term exposure to stress can cause job burnout. Job burnout can result in seclusion, poor work performance, an increased likelihood of poor work relationships, work-family conflict, suicide, disability retirement, alcohol and drug abuse,



and a feeling of detachment in correctional staff (Lambert, Hogan and Altheimer, 2010).

Job burnout is of particular concern in correctional staff because of their job to maintain the safety of the prison (Finn, 2000). If they fail to perform their duties well, they can endanger themselves, their co-workers and/or the incarcerated people in their care.

The awareness of the health and wellbeing issues in correctional officers in particular affecting prison safety increased in 2012, when Spinaris et al. performed a nationwide study on 3599 correctional officers. Twenty-seven percent of the officers in the study suffered from symptoms of PTSD. The officers with PTSD symptoms had higher rates of substance abuse, stress, anxiety, depression and a general low satisfaction of life. Spinaris et al. showed this as a particular concern in custodial correctional officers that witnessed violent incidents. It is therefore important to understand how prisons can decrease the rate of violence in both inmates and staff.

### **Stress Reduction in Prisons**

Several programs have been implemented in prisons to address the serious issue of stress in correctional staff. These programs include: training of staff in stress reduction skills, counseling for staff, counseling for staff families, and post-crisis counseling (Finn, 2000; Schwarz and Levitas, 2012). One example of an impactful prison stress reduction training program was started by a non-profit organization called HeartMath, who created a program called Power to Change Performance. This program included teaching the correctional staff to use a series of techniques to refocus and restructure emotions related to stress or trauma. Researchers found that the program lowered cholesterol levels, glucose levels, heart rate, blood pressure and helped participants have a generally more positive attitude (McCraty et al, 2009). Correctional institutions taking advantage of

outside resources like this demonstrates one way the Department of Corrections has taken action in reducing stress.

However, models like these are difficult to implement in many correctional institutions because of the time and cost associated with the trainings (Price, 2010). Many prisons are short staffed and are experiencing high turnover rates. More studies need to be done in order to understand how smaller, less costly changes in the prison environment could reduce stress.

This study is specifically related to a program in the Washington State Department of Corrections. In Washington state, there are a few options available for correctional staff who are experiencing work related stress. There is an anonymous hotline that staff can call into to talk to someone about what they are going through, there are WADOC counselors who the staff members can make an appointment to talk to free of charge and there is a trauma debriefing that happens after a staff member experiences a traumatic event. The trauma debriefing is approximately one hour long and the staff members usually go back to their daily work activities immediately after the briefing. According to a conversation with a previous WADOC leader, funding is an issue in providing more intensive resources for staff members.

### **Impacts of Nature: Vegetation and Forest Settings**

**Wellbeing.** Abundant literature provides evidence that exposure to nature improves overall wellbeing (Kaplan, 1995; Russell et al, 2013; Zhang et al, 2014). For example, in 1982, Ulrich found that scenes of nature, defined as vegetation and forest settings, had a more positive impact on a study subject's emotional state than did scenes

of urban settings. In 1984, Ulrich showed evidence of reduced recovery time for patients with a window scene of nature versus a window scene of a brick wall.

These early studies led to researchers investigating the impacts of nature on persons exposed to places that can cause psychological distress. People's work environment was one stressor that has been examined, as most people spend a great deal of time in their work environment and work can be a large source of stress (Chang and Chen, 2005).

For example, in 2005, Chang and Chen studied the reactions of students to different office spaces. The monitored participants observed pictures of office spaces with varying degrees of nature exposure and one office space with no nature exposure. The participants displayed less anxiety with a window view of nature than a window view of an urban scene. This study shows promise for how nature can be used as a tool to reduce stress in a work environment.

**Prosocial behavior.** Nature not only has been shown to improve emotional states, but has also been shown to increase prosocial behaviors such as helpfulness and an increased concern for others (Weinstein et al, 2009; Zhang et al, 2014). In a three part study, Weinstein et al. (2009) demonstrated that the study subjects immersed in nature tended to be more generous and less selfish than those who were immersed in urban scenes. The studies determined this by conducting surveys before and after exposure to nature. More recently, in 2014, Zhang et al found that more beautiful nature has stronger impacts on helpfulness, fairness and likelihood to share.

Since work relationships inside the prison serve as one of the major causes of stress for correctional staff (Fenn, 2000; Yang, Brown and Moon, 2011), the link between

nature and prosocial behavior may have an interesting impact on relationships in the prison environment. Increased prosocial behavior could have positive impacts on relationships, such as causing the staff to be fairer with the inmates and the staff being more helpful towards other staff. However, prosocial behavior may have a negative impact by causing a staff member to drop their guard and allow for inmate manipulation by being too friendly.

### **Impacts of Nature: Animals**

**Wellbeing.** Pets have been used for therapeutic purposes since at least 1860, when Florence Nightingale recorded her use of animals with patients who required long-term care (Nightingale, 1969). Pets and trained therapy animals have been shown to improve both mental and physical health in humans. Dogs are by far, the most studied animals in the research supporting these claims. Dogs have been shown to decrease loneliness in elderly people in assisted living centers (Banks & Banks, 2002), reduce stress (Barker & Dawson, 1998; Lass-Hennemann et al, 2014; Odendaal, 2000), lower blood pressure (Jackson, 2012; Odendaal, 2000), increase survival rate after a heart attack (Jackson, 2010), and to decrease depression and anxiety (Jackson, 2010; Odendaal, 2000). Dogs are researched most of all because they are well-known and common household pets and therapy animals. We have a long history with dogs, but what about other species?

The research on other species of pets is sparse (Hosey & Melfi, 2014), but there are a few. In 2003 Shiloh et al compared the stress relieving abilities of fluffy pets, scaly pets and stuffed animals after the research subject was exposed to a stressful stimulus. The fluffy pet used was a rabbit and the scaly pet used was a turtle. The turtle and the

rabbit both significantly reduced reported stress levels and were shown to be equally effective in reducing stress. The presence of a stuffed animal alone did not significantly impact stress levels. This study is one of few studies done on unusual pets and it is of particular interest to this thesis research, the programs being evaluated in this research involve caring for turtles. However, the turtles in the prison program are not considered pets and are not handled often. This leads to the question; does just the mere presence of an animal or viewing of wild free roaming or caged animals have impacts on human health?

The impacts of viewing free roaming wildlife on human health are difficult to study for reasons such as the unpredictability of the wildlife. There is anecdotal evidence that such encounters, at the very least, create a sense of awe and adventure. For example, in 2004 Valentine & Birtles spoke of the potential impacts of wildlife viewing:

Humans often have extremely intense and deeply personal experiences through wildlife watching and this may lead to outcomes that are extraordinarily in their impacts on people's lives.

However, little to no research has been done on human health impacts. Therefore, we look to the perhaps more pertinent literature to this study, which includes the impacts of aquariums and interactions with captive zoo animals. For example, in 2003 Barker et al found that hospital waiting rooms with aquariums reduced anxiety in psychiatric patients versus waiting rooms without aquariums. This directs our attention to the potential for the presence of the turtles in the tanks at the prisons to possibly reduce anxiety in the residents in the program and staff who spend time in the turtle area.

More research needs to be done to fully understand the impacts of a wider variety of species (Valentine and Birtles, 2004), such as the turtles involved in this thesis

research, however the existing research on the ability of many animals and animal encounters to improve mental and/or physical wellbeing of humans shows the potential for the turtles to improve human wellbeing.

**Safety and fear.** Ensuring a safe prison environment is on top of the priority list for correctional staff members. Fear is an emotion often experienced in prisons whether it is coming from a staff member or a resident concerned for their wellbeing. How could fear and safety play into the impacts the turtle programs have on correctional staff?

Not everyone experiences animals in a positive way and not every human-animal interaction is positive. Some people have had negative and even traumatizing experiences with animals and thus experience fear towards them. For example, in the research previously mentioned which showed that pets in nursing homes reduced loneliness, Banks and Banks in 2002 had 8 residents refuse to participate in the study due to their fear of dogs. According to the Mental Health Foundation, fear can cause many physiological effects, including increased heart rate, nausea, and dizziness (“Fear”, 2015). This is an important consideration for this study in particular. If a staff member is afraid of reptiles, this would have an impact on how the programs affect them.

Secondly, if a staff member is uninformed about the program at hand, they may have concerns about disease. In working with wild animals, these are legitimate concerns, as there has been an increase in diseases in wild animals around the world (Daszak et al, 2000). However, there is little to no concern of zoonotic diseases in the animals in the turtle programs.

On another note, pets have also been shown to increase feelings of safety (Odendaal, 2000). This would most likely not be the case if the person at hand is scared

of the pet, but it could increase feelings of safety in a prison environment through having animals present for those without fear.

Finally, a more complicating factor in animals and the concern for safety and fear, is the impact of the emotions of the humans on the animals. In 2009, Carlstead found that a decrease in job satisfaction in zookeepers was linked to an increase in fear responses of the animals. What about the possibility of staff members or residents in the programs with negative emotions impacting the animals and thus impacting the experience of the people around them? This may be subtle, but merits consideration.

**Empathy.** One way in which animals may be able to increase the safety of prisons is through nurturing the feeling of empathy. Animal programs have shown to increase feelings of empathy through nurturing and caring for something other than themselves. For example, in 2003 Strimple found that a horse program in a prison successfully taught incarcerated people how to care and trust. If incarcerated people are learning to nurture and care, this could potentially decrease the likelihood of those people being violent, which could in turn decrease the stress of the correctional staff.

In addition, it is possible that the correctional staff who have spent time with the animals in the program build connections with the animals. This could increase the concern for the animals and their wellbeing. In 2009, Clayton et al found that zoo visitors had increased concern for the wellbeing of the animals after just one experience with the animals, such as looking them in the eyes. If this alone can have an impact on a zoo visitor, there is a possibility that the correctional staff involved in the programs could be increasing their feelings of empathy and thus increasing their care for the wellbeing of

animals, which may expand to the wellbeing of the incarcerated people they are in charge of.

**Prosocial Behavior.** Furthermore, interacting with animals and caring for animals does not only increase feelings of empathy, but also promotes social behavior. Dog-human relationships are an excellent and well studied example of this. Imagine how giving an anti-social person a pet dog might change their behavior. They would now be required to go outside in order to walk their dog. People walking by naturally comment, initiating a conversation that may have never happened. Pet dogs have been shown to increase their human's community participation, encourage others around them to be more social and get outside and have been shown to increase their human's confidence in performing certain behaviors (Jackson, 2010). In 2000, Odendaal sought physiological evidence of the impacts of human-dog interactions. Based on the physiological results, such as an increase in oxytocin, they found that a positive human-dog interaction resulted in increased attention seeking behavior. This means that one positive human-dog interaction increased the desire to be social.

In a prison setting, this could have major impacts on the social life inside and outside the prison. However, for this thesis we are looking at the impacts of turtles, not dogs. What about other species? Again, we can begin to find the answer by looking at research that has been done with zoo animals. Zoos have been found to instigate conversations among visitors (Clayton et al, 2009), bring people out to give their children the experience (Falk, 2006) and even provide a place for teenagers to bond over their fear of an animal (Clayton et al, 2009). If the result of the relationship between the animals in the prison programs is somewhere in between the high social impact of dogs and the



conversational stimulation of zoo animals, one could imagine the possible impacts in a typically anti-social (in the case of the resident-staff relationships) prison setting.

**Learning.** Animals have been shown to increase curiosity and an interest in learning in zoo visitors. In 2009, Clayton et al studied the impacts of viewing zoo animals on the visitors at a zoo. They found that viewing the animals not only had the potential to develop a connection with the animals, but also left visitors with an interest in learning more about the animal and how to help the animal. Clayton et al also mentioned that there seems to be a difference between zoo visitors and the general public. The zoo visitor might have a preexisting interest in animals and thus be prone to wanting to learn more about them. The closeness of the visitor to the animal also has an impact on the visitor's reaction. In 2014, Powell & Bullock found that the closer the animal encounter the zoo visitor experienced the greater connection the visitor felt towards the animal.

This may mean that staff members involved in the turtle program in the prison may see an increase in their interest in learning, particularly after a close interaction with the turtles. However, this may depend on a particular staff member's level of preexisting interest in animals. Therefore, the staff members with the closest interactions with the turtles and the greatest interest in animals would be expected to have the greatest connection with the animals and greatest increase in an interest to learn.

In addition to increasing curiosity and interest in learning in zoo visitors, animals have also been shown to increase the attention to a teacher in a classroom. For example, in 2012, Beetz et al found the presence of a dog in a 1<sup>st</sup> grade classroom increased the attention given to the teacher. If a turtle has the potential to increase attention as well, this could mean there is a potential for both the residents in the program and the staff

involved to give the partners and students who come in to teach more attention than they would in a normal classroom.

### **Nature & Animals in Prisons**

Nature programs in prisons throughout the United States encompass inmate gardening, composting, worm bins, raising endangered species, caring for dogs and cats, propagating endangered plants and more. All of these nature programs focus on the rehabilitation of inmates, but overlook the possible stress reducing impacts on correctional staff.

Likewise, the majority of the studies done on these programs have been directed toward the impacts on the residents (Ulrich and Nadkarni, 2009; Waitkus, 2004). For example, in a review of the history of animal programs in prisons in 2003, Strimple found that animal programs have shown to reduce recidivism rates and teach life enhancing skills to the incarcerated people, but does not explore how these impacts may benefit the staff members by minimizing the frustration of watching incarcerated people consistently leave and return to prison.

Only one study found in this review- a doctoral thesis by the founder of the Insight Garden Project- examined the impacts of installing a garden in San Quentin State Prison on correctional officers. This study pointed towards the possibility of stress reduction because one staff member reported reduced stress. This particular staff member found that the increased busyness of the inmates in the garden kept the inmates out of trouble and thus made the staff member's job easier (Waitkus, 2004). The lack of data on staff members underscores the need to conduct more studies that look into the impact of nature in prisons on the prison staff.

**The Sustainability in Prisons Project.** The Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP) started as a partnership between The Evergreen State College (TESC) and the Washington State Department of Corrections (WADOC) in 2003. The partnership has grown to include organizations such as the Center for Natural Lands Management, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Zoo, Woodland Park Zoo, and Northwest Trek Wildlife Park (Trivett et al, 2015). The mission of the Sustainability in Prisons Project is to “bring science and nature into prisons” (Trivett et al, 2015). Programs include raising the endangered Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly, rehabilitating western pond turtles, aquaculture using tilapia to provide nutrients to crops, beekeeping and more. These programs could not succeed without the help of correctional staff. Correctional staff provide a range of roles in the programs, from escorting visitors to the program location to training and supervising the inmates in the program operation. Staff members also experience hands-on involvement in growing plants and raising endangered animals with the inmates.

This thesis research is a case study of the Sustainability in Prisons Project’s Western Pond Turtle (WPT) Programs at Larch and Cedar Creek Corrections Centers. These programs both involve rehabilitating an endangered turtle suffering from a shell disease.

***Western Pond Turtle Rehabilitation Program.*** The historical population of WPT in Washington State had declined drastically over time due to overharvesting for food, loss of habitat and invasive species. Extirpated from most of their range in Washington State, WPT were listed as a state endangered species in the 1990s. The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), the Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ) and Oregon

Zoo (OZ) started a head start program in the 1990s to help bring the population back up in the wild. This program collects the eggs from the nests, hatches them in zoos and raises the hatchlings in the zoos until they are a size that is big enough to protect them from being swallowed by an invasive bullfrog. The population is successfully growing larger, but another setback came along the way. In the early 2000s the shells of the adult turtles started to have lesions appear in them. This disease became known as Ulcerative Shell Disease (USD). The cause of USD is yet unknown and research is in progress to try gain a better understanding of the disease. In the mean time, a team of biologists, zookeepers and veterinarians is working on developing an effective treatment for the adult turtles suffering from the disease. This is where the prisons became a part of turtle recovery team. WDFW expressed a need to SPP for a space to house the endangered turtles with shell disease to give the shells time to heal in a clean and warm environment.

The turtles suffering from the shell disease receive acute care from partnering veterinarians. They are then sent to the prisons, where the trained residents in the program care for and monitor the turtles until the shells are healed and the animals are ready to be released.

The WPT program started at Cedar Creek Corrections Center (Cedar Creek) in 2012 and moved to Larch Corrections Center (Larch) in December of 2015. The basic structure of the two programs is similar; however there are some differences in how the programs are run. There is an SPP program coordinator, a graduate student from TESC and an employee of SPP, who checks in on the program, communicates and coordinates between all partners involved and provides training and educational opportunities to the residents in both programs. However, due to the distance from TESC to Larch, the

coordinator is only able to go out to Larch once per month, whereas they go out to Cedar Creek once per week. Therefore, Larch receives less educational opportunities than Cedar Creek.

Educational opportunities at both Cedar Creek and Larch include reading science journal articles and seminarng on them, practicing public speaking, discussing readings on climate change and other science topics and going on field trips to release the turtles and participate in field research. In addition, partners come in to visit once per month to check up on the turtles at each facility, such as veterinarians and WDFW biologists who teach the residents in the program and the staff about the recovery efforts, research and other facts about the species. Other professionals also come in to tour the programs every once in awhile and these people bring learning opportunities as well. Recently, an environmental journalism professor writing a book on turtles took a tour of the turtle program at Larch and interviewed the residents in the program for his book.

The other difference between the Larch and Cedar Creek programs is the difference in who supervises the residents in the program and assists with coordinating visitor clearances and communication between the residents in the program and the SPP student coordinator. This person is referred to as the SPP Liaison. The SPP Liaison at Cedar Creek is a case manager-also known as a classifications counselor- who volunteers to take on extra responsibilities on top of their case manager duties. The SPP liaison at Larch is a staff member whose job includes managing all of the sustainability programs at the facility as well as assisting in the protocols for the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). This difference changes the way the workload of the turtle program is

perceived and thus has the potential to cause a difference between the wellbeing of the staff members in the SPP Liaison position at Larch and at Cedar Creek.

The other difference between the programs is the location of the turtle building on the prison grounds. The Cedar Creek turtle building is outside of the fence while the Larch turtle building is inside of the fence. Although the Larch building is inside the fence, it is still in an area outside of the main grounds and provides similar low amounts of supervision as compared to the building location of Cedar Creek. Other than these differences, the two programs are similar in their operations.

This leads to the following research questions:

### **Research Question**

Do the Sustainability in Prisons Project's Conservation Western Pond Turtle Programs impact the work environment of Washington Department of Corrections Prison staff? If so, how?

- Do these programs impact the stress level of the work environment? If so, how?
- Do these programs impact the relationship between staff and inmates? If so, how?
- Do these programs impact the general atmosphere of the facility? If so, how?
- If there are impacts, are they more positive or negative?

### **Significance**

This research provides information about how nature and animals may play a role in increasing the wellbeing of correctional in the prison work environment. Results showing a positive association between working with nature and increased wellbeing,

supports the spread of SPP further throughout the United States. The results that indicate this work decreases the wellbeing of select staff will be shared with the prisons and SPP in the hopes of creating changes to create a better work environment for all involved.

These results are a beginning to helping make prisons in the United States healthier for correctional staff. Healthier staff create a healthier and safer environment for the prison as a whole.

## **Methods**

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

In order to answer my research question, I interviewed each staff member in the program who was willing to participate for 30-45 minutes in person and gave them a brief questionnaire. I grouped the staff members into three groups: **Directly Involved Staff (DS)**, **Indirectly Involved Staff (IS)** and **Leadership Staff (LS)**. DS includes those whom have worked in the role of SPP Liaison for at least three weeks. SPP Liaisons are those with the task of assisting with the communication and safety between the SPP student coordinator and the residents, as well as some of the educational programming and attending animal releases. IS includes those whom have been involved in the programs in a lesser role, such as working near the turtle building, working with the residents in the program in another capacity, interacting with the SPP student coordinator on a regular basis, and/or driving the residents in the program to release sites and/or field trips. LS includes the superintendents-the role that was referred to as the warden in the past- as well as the person in the role of Correctional Programs Manager (CPM), who oversees all programs and who is second in command to the Superintendent.

The following are the interview questions I used as guidelines for the interviews, as well as the questions included on the questionnaire:

*Interview Questions for Staff Directly or Indirectly Involved in the Program:*

1. How would you describe your experience with the butterfly/turtle program?
2. (If the person is directly involved in the program) How did you become involved in the program?
3. What have you noticed about its effects on you? Would you say this program has impacted your stress level of your work environment? If so, how?
4. Has this program impacted the relationship between you and the inmates? If so, how?
5. Has this program impacted the general atmosphere of the facility? If so, how?
6. Has this program impacted your feelings or interest in nature/wildlife/sustainability? If so, how?
7. What impact does participation have on job satisfaction? Relationships with colleagues as result of participation?

*Questionnaire for Staff Directly or Indirectly Involved in the Program:*

1. How long have you worked at the facility you are currently employed?
2. How long have you worked for Washington Department of Corrections?
3. What is your job title?



4. Did you have an interest in working with animals prior to your involvement in this program?
5. Did you have an interest in science or sustainability prior to your involvement in this program?
6. (If person is directly involved in the program) Did you volunteer for this program or were you assigned?
7. Are you involved with any other programs in the facility? If so, please list here:

*Interview Questions for Prison Superintendents:*

1. How would you describe your experience with the turtle program?
2. How many years have you worked with DOC?
3. How many years at Cedar Creek?
4. Why have SPP programs?
5. Have you noticed any impacts the turtle program has on the staff members? If so, what impacts?
6. What is your sense of how staff feel about the turtle program?
7. Have you noticed any impacts the turtle program has on the relationships between inmates and staff? If so, what impacts?
8. Has this program impacted the general atmosphere of the facility? If so, how?
9. Has this program impacted your feelings or interest in nature/wildlife/sustainability? If so, how?
10. Has this program impacted how the facility is viewed statewide? If so, how?

11. How do you feel this program impacts the way staff feel about working in prisons?
12. How do you feel this program impacts work stress?
13. What is the first story that comes to mind when you think of SPP programs? How has this program impacted the stories heard in prison from staff or inmates?

### **Qualitative Research Rationale**

Going into this thesis, I intended to identify how the turtle program impacts the work environment of correctional staff. However, in order to truly understand the impacts, there would need to be staff available to survey before and after program involvement. All of the staff currently involved in the program have been involved in the program since the start of this research and therefore it was not possible to do a before and after evaluation in a more quantitative study. In addition, it would have been extremely challenging to find a control group. Finally, there are no studies to base what parameters to study in a quantitative research project.

This led this research into a purely qualitative approach with the goal of understanding all of the possible ways the WPT programs may impact the staff members' work environment. The parameters that come up for staff in these interviews can be used as guidelines for a future quantitative study. In addition, talking to each staff member individually in a semi-structured interview gives the reader a better understanding of the complex relationship between the staff members and the WPT program and/or SPP programs in general. This will add greater value and understanding to compliment any future quantitative research.

### **Qualitative Analysis**

I used a qualitative research software program called Atlas.ti to analyze my interview data. I coded the interviews and pulled main themes from the interview responses.

## **Results & Discussion**

### **Pronouns and Terminology**

In an attempt to better protect the identity of the interviewees, the gender of the staff members is not revealed. The gender neutral pronoun of they/them/their is used throughout. Whenever a binary pronoun was revealed in an interview quote, the binary pronouns were removed and gender neutral pronouns were placed in square brackets.

In addition, throughout this paper incarcerated people will be referred to as residents. The word ‘offender’ has negative connotations and places inherent judgment on the incarcerated individuals. The word ‘offender’ will be present in the words of some of the interviewees.

Finally, please note that the job title referred to as a ‘classifications counselor’ will also be referred to as a ‘case manager.’ These terms will be used interchangeably. I refer to this role as ‘case manager’ because this is a more descriptive title of the work these staff members do. The title of ‘classifications counselor’ can be confusing, as these staff members are not certified counselors, but instead are in charge of managing the cases of the residents on their caseload. However, ‘classifications counselor’ is the more commonly used term and will be present in the interview responses.

### **Staff Wellbeing**

As mentioned previously, there is a serious concern for the wellbeing of correctional staff because of the potential high stress work environment that they are exposed to (Finn, 2000). Interacting with nature and animals has been shown to increase overall wellbeing

in humans. Therefore, it would not be surprising if the presence of a turtle conservation program, which brings nature in the form of wild animals into a prison, improves the wellbeing of correctional staff. However, there are multiple factors involved in these programs, which complicate the potential benefits of nature and animals. For example, the priority in a prison is to keep the environment secure. If the turtle program impacts security, this may contribute to negative feelings towards the program. The following sections discuss the results of the LS, DS and IS interviews on the impact they describe the programs having on their overall wellbeing.

**Leadership staff.** The leadership staff (LS) at Cedar Creek and Larch both see an overall positive impact on the wellbeing of staff. However, the LS at Larch seem to report a stronger positive impact on staff wellbeing than Cedar Creek. In the following section, how the programs impact wellbeing from the point of view of LS and some thoughts as to why the differences between the two facilities exist will be discussed.

**Punitive to collaborative.** The most frequently discussed positive impact on prison staff during the LS interviews, which also happens to be a positive impact on the entire prison operation, is the way the turtle program, along with other SPP programs, has the potential to increase the collaborative nature of prisons and decreases the traditional punitive nature of prisons. One LS at Cedar Creek stated that the turtle program gives staff and residents:

A break from the traditional roles-a chance to work collaboratively together. The environmental factor is a lessening of the adversarial roles. If you and I are not adversarial, we have a better working relationship...allows us to work better outside of SPP programs too...because of the relationship with SPP I am not just doing something negative. I might be coming to talk about frogs or turtles or fun events.

This LS is explaining that the people who work directly with the residents in the turtle program end up developing a collaborative work relationship both inside and outside of the program. Later in the interview, this LS goes further to say that the conversations you hear in the prison change from punitive to more friendly:

Hear more people talking friendly instead of “Tuck your shirt in.” or “Where is your ID?”-rather than directive conversation, now it’s a two-way conversation. Now you have somebody that adds value.

This statement not only brings out the potential of the turtle program to improve the collaboration between staff and residents, but also emphasizes the ability of the turtle program to empower the residents. This will be discussed more in depth in the section on prosocial relationships. However, it is important to mention here because empowering the residents to use their voice and be seen as adding value to the facility leads to a more collaborative and positive work environment. This, in turn, leads to an increase in staff wellbeing. This LS explains further by saying that the program brings a “common ground” to the residents and the staff members.

It seems to be a more professional common ground. There is a common interest that is appropriate to share. There are professional boundaries about personal life. A common ground to build something together-less about staff-inmate-a central point for both of you to stand and work together; something that is traditionally outside the lines. Traditionally always trying to catch them doing something wrong; this is about working together to do something right.

Here this LS highlights the importance of keeping professional boundaries with the residents and not disregarding DOC training, while still breaking down some barriers through common interests. The LS states that this “collaborative relationship is less stressful.”

The other LS at Cedar Creek agrees with this person about the increase in collaborative relationships within the turtle program through developing a common ground:

But they can talk the same talk. If the talk is about a common subject, it relaxes the conversation. Talking about the corrections or the art of correcting people, creates conflicts. Communication is the biggest issue.

Relationships built upon respectful communication can lead to a better workplace environment and thus has the potential to reduce stress and improve wellbeing of the correctional staff. This LS goes on to say that the “staff are more calm, focused and collaborative” in the presence of SPP programs like the turtle program. However, they also mention the staff do not always get along and sometimes bicker, but they come together when needed. This bickering begins to bring up one of the main differences between the responses from the LS at Cedar Creek and the LS at Larch. However, we will first discuss the ways in which Larch LS agree with the LS at Cedar Creek.

The LS at Larch overwhelmingly agree with the LS at Cedar Creek about the turtle programs and other SPP programs ability to change the punitive work environment in a prison to one that is more collaborative. One LS at Larch discussed how SPP programs impact the general atmosphere of the prison:

When we find ourselves working together - it's often us and them - Sustainability programs [puts hands together] start acting as a team. It brings us closer together. Most of the time, we treat them [residents involved] with more respect.

In describing their experience working in prisons before sustainability programs and the shift in the prisons after they were included, they go on to say:

It used to be slave driver and slave. That's how it was when I first started. That is breaking down. Treat people the way you want to be treated. It's hard to stay mad when they start becoming John Smith, not offender.

Here, this LS is talking about the turtle program as well as other SPP programming. When the resident suddenly has a name and is not just referred to as ‘offender’ or their DOC number it humanizes them. When a person is referred to as just an offender, they become part of an all encompassing offensive population of people who deserve punishment. This makes it easy to form a black and white mindset and lose the idea that the residents hold any value. When people are not seen as human, it becomes a lot easier to treat them poorly. This LS feels having these programs changes the way staff treat incarcerated people. It brings the staff and the residents closer together and forms an atmosphere of collaboration rather than a punitive focus, similar to the impacts described by the LS at Cedar Creek. Therefore, it seems that communication between the staff and the residents in the program is improving - not due to different communication techniques or skills being used - but because of a common goal and shared interests.

Another LS at Larch has a similar viewpoint when discussing their experience when SPP programs first started coming into the prisons:

I remember when these programs first started hitting the department. It was a hassle. Now everyone wants it first. This is an incredible improvement over the way we do business and engage the residents. It’s an important change...It has been a good thing for us.

In this comment, this LS is referring to how SPP programs have become accepted throughout the Washington State prison system. They seem to think that SPP is now widely accepted and welcomed in prisons and that this acceptance has come with a shift away from a punitive approach towards a collaborative approach.

In the turtle program, the staff work together with the residents. Both the staff and the residents go into the program having limited knowledge about the turtles they will care for. Through the turtle program coordinator at SPP and outside partners such as

zoos and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, the residents and staff are able to ask questions, learn about the turtles and their recovery needs, and be trained in the protocols together. The staff members are still in charge of making sure the residents are on track and doing what they are supposed to be doing, but at the same time the residents and staff are learning with and from each other about a common subject. This creates a more collaborative work environment despite the power dynamic.

By itself, the turtle program is small. There are usually a total of five residents and two staff directly involved in the combined programs at a time. I do not think these LS were trying to make the claim that the turtle program alone changes the way the prison works, however, an important point is that such programs may change the working relationships between staff and residents directly involved in the programs. It follows that SPP-type programs have the potential to shift the prison environment as a whole to be more collaborative and less punitive. Whether it is a few staff members in the turtle program or 20 staff members in all of the SPP-like programs in the prison, this shift to a collaborative work environment can reduce negativity, increase positivity, reduce stress and therefore increase the wellbeing of both correctional staff and residents.

*Stress reduction.* At Larch, the LS talk about the wide acceptance of SPP programs and do not mention any current skepticism or non acceptance of SPP programs. This is one of the biggest differences between the interview results from Cedar Creek and Larch. Both of the LS from Cedar Creek agreed in overall stress relieving and positive impacts of the program on staff wellbeing, but Cedar Creek LS acknowledged that for a select few individuals the program has the potential to be stress inducing and produce negativity.



For example, one LS at Cedar Creek separates the prison staff into two different categories, the professional staff and personal staff. They explain that the professional staff feel positively about the programs and feel a small amount of stress relief from the programs because the collaborative relationship is less stressful. In addition, the professional staff are focused on their job and doing it well. On the other hand, the LS describes the personal staff as seeking out drama and stress in the work environment. The LS explains the personal staff have negative views of the turtle program, not because of the content of the program, but because the leadership staff support the program and the personal staff have a problem with leadership.

In other words, the professional staff are motivated to do their job well and the turtle program helps them do so. Therefore, these staff find the program satisfying and stress relieving. It does not solve all of the stress issues in the prison, but it helps. On the other hand, the personal staff will find a way to make the program stressful because they are more motivated by their relationship with the leadership at the facility and if the leadership like the program, then the personal staff will find a way not to like it.

Then this LS goes on to say that the program does have an overall positive impact on the atmosphere of the prison despite the view of the personal staff and that even the personal staff can see some value in the program:

Overall positive... Even the personal staff can understand the value of the environmental impacts and the positivity. It's positive.

Here, the LS says, the personal staff gain some level of wellbeing from the program because the program is helping the environment. They hit the point home by saying that even people not involved, whether personal or professional, in the program are impacted by the positive concept of the programs' existence and the atmosphere it produces:

It is a feel good we are doing something for the environment for officers and other staff. Even people who may not be involved in it whatsoever, but the whole concept of the program was really positive for these folks.

This LS also mentions another broader problem, which may impact both personal and professional staff. The SPP liaison position is a volunteer position at Cedar Creek, meaning they someone volunteers to take on extra responsibilities in addition to their full workload as a case manager. The liaison position's duties include: supervising the residents in the programs, facilitating communication between the SPP student coordinator and the residents, escorting the SPP student coordinator and coordinating program tours and visitor clearances. This can impact staff wellbeing negatively because it increases the workload for staff that already have a full plate:

It is volunteer. When no one volunteers it becomes assigned. Initial negative impact on workload- "extra work for me;" I think that typically goes away.

This workload issue at Cedar Creek is also mentioned by the DS at Cedar Creek. In addition, when the SPP liaison position at Larch was voluntary before a sustainability position was created, the DS at Larch described this as a major issue as well. This will be discussed further in the 'Constructive Criticism' section, but it is an important negative impact on workload with a possible solution to consider of creating a full time sustainability position in both prisons.

The other LS at Cedar Creek did not break up the staff into two defined categories. Instead they discussed the tendency for staff, including: custody stuff, case managers, and building maintenance to have particular views based on their roles inside the facility.

You get the naysayers that want to say it's all fluff. It's extra and we shouldn't be giving the inmates extra. They inhibit things... They think the inmates don't deserve it. The negativity does bleed over into their work, but I think the values

outweigh the negativity. This probably pertains to custody staff more than anyone else...Maintenance staff-it's a workload issue-it may look like resistance, but it's just that they don't have time and effort.

This LS is saying that the custody staff tend to have more negativity toward the program because they can be uninformed or they have different opinions about what the residents deserve or do not deserve. Custody staff handle all emergency situations at the prison and interact with inmates in a traditionally punitive manner, which may create a particular challenge for them when trying to grasp collaborative SPP programs like the turtle program. Although the maintenance staff may seem to have a negative view of the program, their negativity is based upon a heavy workload of repairs needed in the prison. This decrease in job satisfaction and the wellbeing of these particular staff due to the turtle program is not the common reaction to the program, but it does exist. In addition, this LS believes that the values of the program outweigh the negativity of these particular staff members.

However, this is not the final statement of this LS on this issue. They also think that there is a possibility to counteract these negative views on the program.

Involving them and finding the uniqueness about the program that works for them would help. Things like the TERT lessens anxiety. Custody folks love emergency response stuff! It's what they do all of the time. It's their focus.

This LS is saying that if the staff involved in the programs, interpret the programs to the custody staff in a way that is meaningful to them, then the program will get more buy in from the custody staff. TERT stands for the Turtle Emergency Response Team. TERT, as referred to above by this LS, is one example of how emergency protocols were developed to gain custody staff buy-in. An SPP liaison and the SPP student coordinator - myself - developed a training plan to educate staff members in how to respond in

different turtle health emergencies or when the residents were unable to access the turtles during a lockdown. The LS was saying that this gained custody staff buy-in because custody staff thrive off of emergency response. If the program is interpreted in a way that has meaning, it can change opinions on the program and thus impact the wellbeing of custody staff as well as others in a positive way.

On another note, this particular LS also mentioned both stressful and a stress relieving impact on their position in leadership:

Sometimes it adds stress in that I don't ever want to disappoint SPP. When the program is working, when you go to a release-there is a huge relief of stress.

This LS feels the need to succeed in SPP programs. If they do not succeed, they feel stressed and if they do succeed they feel stress relief.

The LS at Larch do not mention any stressful impacts of the program, however they do agree about the stress relieving effects of the program, particularly through working with animals:

Any living thing can help you reduce your stress level.  
It drops your stress level. It's hard to be stressed when you are having fun.  
Drives/prevents a lot of people from getting uptight when they normally would be...find yourself in a lot better mood with residents.

Here, this LS is discussing the fun aspect of working with animals. Having fun is stress reducing and also puts the staff in a better mood. If the staff are in a better mood, they treat the residents better.

**Chain reaction.** This is an example of one chain reaction as result of the existence of the turtle program and programs like it that is discussed by both Cedar Creek and Larch LS. Both pairs of LS describe the impact of the programs giving the residents a chance to succeed and when the residents succeed, the staff have a feeling of success.

When the staff have a feeling of success, they gain job satisfaction. When they gain job satisfaction, it improves their mood, when it improves their mood, it improves the way they treat the residents. When the residents are treated better, it improves their mood and behavior. This reduces violence and improves the safety of the prison. This improved mood of the residents also increases their ability to succeed. When the residents succeed, it increases their job satisfaction and so on and so forth. The difference in the reactions of different types of staff described by Cedar Creek creates more complex reactions to the one described above. (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2)

As an example of how the Cedar Creek and Larch staff describe the chain reaction of the turtle program, one LS at Larch said that “Being successful in this [the turtle program] gives them [the residents] confidence to be successful upon release.” This is the chance to succeed that was mentioned in the previous paragraph. The LS also explain how the success the staff feel in helping the residents and the satisfaction they get in contributing to helping the turtles leads to job satisfaction. One LS at Larch explains how the residents succeeding makes the staff feel successful:

That’s how I treat the residents. I want them to be better when they go out from when they come in. We feel good about ourselves. “Look what we did!”

The LS states that the job of the prison is to rehabilitate the residents and the turtle program is one small step in the right direction. One LS describes how the turtle program can help the residents in the program recovery from how they were not given the best chances in the outside world.

The turtles are sick, injured and damaged and there is absolutely no one to care for them. Creating a safe place for them where they can heal and recover-very similar to what we do-it’s a good way for understanding it’s not all their fault as to why they ended up the way they did. They can really begin to see that you [referring to the residents] were not given the best chances. This is an opportunity

for giving back what's been taken away. It's the ability to give reparations even on the smallest of things.

This LS appears to believe prisons should have a rehabilitative focus rather than a punitive one. They refer to prisons as a safe place for healing for both the residents and the turtles in the turtle program. The turtle program gives the staff and the prison the opportunity to give reparations to the residents and this brings this LS satisfaction.

The other LS at Larch seems to agree with this in a way, stating that:

The people in prison are broke; we are all a little broke. It's not our job to punish, it's our job to help-find out what their needs are. We give them a purpose-animals, DNR, fight fires, plant trees-helps them start to feel more empowered; win-win again.

This LS also seems to believe that the prison's job is to rehabilitate the residents and that programs that give the residents a purpose, like the turtle program, help in that mission.

Thus these programs may produce some job satisfaction in helping to accomplish that goal. However, this LS also states very clearly that the turtle program is a small project and thus has a limited capacity to make change due to its small scope with only three residents involved at a time at Larch.

Beyond the job satisfaction gained from the success of the residents is the job satisfaction gained from contributing to helping animals and the environment. All four of the LS interviewed described the importance of breaking up the routine of the prison.

Getting away from repetitive tasks and adding variety to the daily work creates increased job satisfaction. For example, one LS at Larch describes their experience going on a turtle release:

When I was able to witness the releases, that makes you feel good to think outside the box. Especially with kids there-just fascinated. And the residents too. It's always rewarding to see that in other people.

This LS gained job satisfaction from breaking up the regular routine and getting out to see the residents and the volunteer youth from the zoo gathered around them, all fascinated by the turtles.

The other LS at Larch states that:

It improves their [the staff's] attitude-not just about security/custody aspects of the job-daily mundane activities. It's not just about these things. We can do more. It's easier to come to work when you have other things to do.

This LS hints that programs like the turtle program may even help reduce turnover rates in the prison, stating that "I think it [the breakup of the routine that these programs offer] motivates them to come to work."

An LS at Cedar Creek, goes on to talk about the satisfaction the staff get from being able to contribute to more than just the prison and create a positive impact on the environment.

The overall value [of the programs]. They hold value to everybody. The offenders get a sense of pride and give back to the community. For staff, it gives them the opportunity to impact something more than just prison-the environment. There is value in efforts to help environmental issues.

This LS goes on to say:

It is easy in prison to be in a routine. This breaks the routine and gives people something new to connect to. Whether people are volunteering, doing science or working for SPP; it makes the work in prison better.

This LS states that the prison staff members feel a need to contribute and that the turtle program and other SPP programs gives the staff who are involved the satisfaction of contributing to the environment. They also agree with Larch LS on the impact the programs have on job satisfaction. This LS stated clearly their belief that the programs - including the turtle program - "makes the work in prison better." This is a clear and

direct positive impact the turtle program may have on the work environment of correctional staff.

The combination of collaborating with the residents, feeling successful, decreasing stress and feeling a sense of job satisfaction would naturally improve the mood of the staff members working in the turtle program. One LS at Larch explains how this mood shift changes the relationship between the staff and the residents in the turtle program, saying that the program is a “Win for staff - less assaults - residents see staff as people too - makes you more human.” This LS thinks that the residents involved in the programs start to see the staff as more human and the staff start to see the residents as people - more than just a DOC number - and this mutual respect creates a safer, more respectful prison environment.

*Safety.* An LS at Cedar Creek describes the turtle program as well as other SPP programs in the facility, stating that:

It changes how the offender behavior occurs. This is a relatively violence free place. You are less likely to feel afraid walking through this facility.

This LS seems to contribute, in part, the low violence rate at Cedar Creek to the programs, like the turtle program, at the facility. This indicates the possibility of the turtle program and programs like it to help increase the safety of the prison and reduce stress in correctional staff. The DS and IS at Cedar Creek and Larch do not all agree with this impact on security, but this will be discussed further in their respective sections. In addition, it is important to note that both Cedar Creek and Larch are minimum security prisons and thus have a naturally low occurrence of violent behavior.

An LS at Larch does seem to agree that SPP like programs do have the potential to reduce violence, however they feel the violence rate is already so low in a camp



setting, that the usefulness of the programs in a minimum security prison lies in the feeling of contribution the programs give the residents involved, stating that “We don’t have violence here, but they need something tangible to feel good about.”

However, this LS at Larch does still note a positive behavior change as a result of SPP programs:

The joy that they are feeling with those experiences impacts their interactions with staff and other residents...

This LS explains that animal programs impact behavior in a positive way in both staff and residents. They believe connecting to the animals is part of what causes this behavior change. Again, this behavior change creates a more positive working environment and thus increases the wellbeing of both correctional staff and residents. This statement is referring to staff who work directly within the programs, but what about some of the impacts the programs may have on the LS specifically?

*Pride.* One way the LS claims the turtle program and other SPP programs impact them, particularly at Cedar Creek, is the pride they experience in having SPP programs.

The LS at Cedar Creek reported having pride in the work they do with SPP programs and thus getting job satisfaction out of this pride. The LS at Cedar Creek also feel the staff members involved in the program have a similar sense of pride. One Cedar Creek LS stated:

It’s a large source of pride at Cedar Creek and HQ - for the agency. It’s a source of pride and commitment for the people who are involved.

This LS has experienced a sense of pride in both WADOC headquarters, Cedar Creek and in the staff members involved in the programs.

In their response to a question asking how having the turtle program at the prison has impacted the view of the prison statewide, the other LS at Cedar Creek responded:

Ask the other [prison leadership staff]. Ask them what facility comes to mind when you think about sustainability. ....they are going to say it started at Cedar Creek.

This sense of pride in the programs seems to impact the work environment of the LS staff at Cedar Creek in a positive way. However, while Larch seems to hold high importance in the turtle program and other animal programs, the interviewed LS did not talk specifically about having pride in the programs. There are several possible reasons for this, such as the fact that Larch's turtle program is new and thus it may not be part of their identity yet or that Larch has more of a focus on expanding and getting more programs started than on getting the word out and setting a standard for other prisons. However, this is all speculative and the real reason for the difference is yet to be determined.

***LS conclusion.*** The LS at both Cedar Creek and Larch seem to agree that the turtle program - in addition to other animal programs - have an overall positive impact on the wellbeing of correctional staff and a positive impact on the residents in the program.

There are some differences between Larch and Cedar Creek that are likely, at least partly, due to the difference in the length of time the program has been at each facility.

There were negative impacts on wellbeing in particular staff members reported by the LS at Cedar Creek, however, the LS stated the overall impact of the programs on the wellbeing of staff was positive and even some of the few who had a negative reaction could be made to change their minds through better communication. This is all from the

viewpoint of the LS. Now let us dive into the responses of the people directly involved, who have or had their hands in the turtle program at Cedar Creek and Larch.

**Direct staff.** The DS at both Larch and Cedar Creek seem to reinforce the thoughts of the LS on how the wellbeing of the staff members is impacted by the turtle program. There are some areas where the LS and the DS views do not align as nicely, which may indicate differences in perceived impacts versus actual impacts on the staff members directly involved in the programs. The following section discusses how the DS feel the turtle programs impact their wellbeing.

***Punitive to collaborative.*** The DS at Larch did not directly discuss a shift from punitive to collaborative in the prison environment with the introduction of SPP programs. I believe the reason for this is because the DS stuck to discussing the smaller picture of the turtle program and not the bigger picture of SPP as a whole. Nevertheless, the DS did discuss some of the impacts of the turtle program which relate back to the impacts of collaboration as described by the LS.

For example, the DS at Larch discussed how the turtle program broke down barriers between them and the residents involved in the programs. One DS at Larch discussed the different roles they had been in throughout their prison career. I will not provide a direct quote here because of confidentiality; however, it is important to note that this DS found that the residents had a drastically different reaction to them depending on the role that this staff member was in. Additionally, this DS explained the strictly punitive roles caused the residents to have a negative view of them and because of their involvement in the turtle program, the residents have a much more positive view of them. This seemed to improve this DS's job satisfaction.

The other DS at Larch did not discuss whether or not the turtle program created a collaborative environment based on a common ground of caring for the turtles between themselves and the residents, as was discussed by the LS at Larch. Rather, this DS placed more emphasis on watching the residents involved in the program learn to collaborate with each other.

Through watching their learning process and allowing them to have ownership in the program...The two that I supervised for turtles came from two completely different backgrounds. Bringing them together and watching them collaborate and learn... I could see their stress greatly reduce...gave them a more positive outlook on life.

This collaboration between the residents was said to improve the relationship between this DS and the residents, as well as improving the overall atmosphere of the facility through contagious positivity.

This DS also placed more emphasis on the benefits of the time and attention they could give the residents involved in the program. This DS felt that the time spent with the residents in the turtle program allowed them to do their job more effectively. Through working with the residents in this environment, this DS was able to get to know the residents and their needs on a deeper level and felt more capable of helping them be successful.

I was able to get a better understanding on the background of the offenders and get a better sense for what they needed to succeed on release.

On the other hand, the DS at Cedar Creek seemed to place more importance on the collaborative nature of the program breaking down barriers between themselves and the residents. One DS explained:

I was trained in keeping certain barriers and although they are human you can't interact on a personal level. Finding offenders interested and willing to work - I knew they were human. I knew I was supposed to treat them differently. This was a step forward from that. Treat them as individuals and not just offenders.

This DS also stated that “working side by side with offenders with something not related to prison was beneficial to both.”

Working within this collaborative framework, this DS seems to have discovered how to and the benefits of treating all residents in the prison with respect and seeing them as individuals, rather than offenders. This more positive and human relationship seems to have improved the wellbeing of this DS. This person goes on later in the interview to discuss the humanity of the residents and how it is possible to treat residents as human while still keeping up necessary boundaries to maintain safety. However, this will be discussed further in the section on DS and prosocial behavior.

Another DS at Cedar Creek was impressed with the amount of knowledge the residents involved in the program had.

I found it to be very informative and learned a lot from the residents. It wasn't as intimidating as I expected.

The residents in the program seem to have earned some respect from this DS because of the amount of information they learned. The residents knew enough that they were able to teach this DS. This goes back to where the LS discussed the ability of the residents to teach gives them value and earns more respect from the staff members.

In conclusion, the DS at Larch seem to place more emphasis on the collaboration between the residents and the improved relationship between staff in collaborative roles versus staff with putative roles. The collaborative nature between the staff and the residents was not emphasized in the DS interviews at Larch. This may be because the program is newer, and thus the results have not become apparent, or it may be because of structural differences between the turtle program at Larch and the program at Cedar Creek. For example, the turtle program at Larch is more hands-off than the turtle program

at Cedar Creek. At Cedar Creek, the SPP coordinator goes out once per week to check-in on the program with the DS and provide educational activities, whereas, the SPP coordinator at Larch goes out once per month. This means less structured educational opportunities shared between the DS and the residents in the program exist at Larch. On the other hand, the DS at Larch also seem to spend more time with the residents in order to ensure communication between the residents and the SPP coordinator on turtle health.

***Stress reduction and Job satisfaction.*** The DS at both Cedar Creek and Larch reported an overall decrease in stress and increase in job satisfaction. There was an increase in stress at times for those DS who were in volunteer positions in addition to their regular duties as a case manager. All of the DS were passionate about the turtle program, but the volunteer position was at times stressful and had the potential to create a heavy workload.

...created a unique balance between work and volunteer activities. It created a lot more work. Being a counselor was my primary responsibility and the programs were kind of the icing on the cake. It wasn't very balanced. It was pretty difficult to maintain...

However, one DS at Cedar Creek explained that for them it is more a matter of figuring out how to have a balance and learning to say "no" to certain tasks you are asked to perform.

... I learned how to place boundaries. There is only so much one person can do in 8 hours. Before working in sustainability, I was [lists off several different programs they were a part of]. I resigned from all except for [names one program] and sustainability.

After struggling with a large workload through their work with SPP, this DS learned the importance of boundaries. After setting them, they did not feel like they were overworked. Although this is admirable that this person was able to do this, setting boundaries is not an easy feat and the hiring of a full time sustainability staff member

would help solve this issue. Adding this position could help to reduce stress. This will be discussed further in the section on constructive criticism. This was the only negative impact on stress level and job satisfaction that was reported by the DS staff.

On a positive note, the DS at Larch reported an overall increase in job satisfaction due to the turtle program. They reported having a better relationship with the residents in the programs, improved communication and teaching moments between staff and residents, increased positivity amongst residents rubbing off on staff, and breaking up repetitive jobs tasks through having fun and learning new things.

One of the DS at Larch explained the stress relief they experienced when working with the residents in the turtle building:

I would say that the program, for me personally, was less stressful and provided me with a chance to get out of prison and have a different type of relationship with the offender population and staff to achieve a common goal. I just really enjoyed the work and interactions. It allowed me to escape for a little bit.

The program created a space of collaboration around a common goal, a similar description to that of the LS. The program also created a getaway from the usual prison tasks for this staff member. Anecdotally, the residents involved in the programs also talk about how the program creates a quiet and peaceful space to get away from the regular prison routine. This may be a common benefit between both the staff members and the residents.

This DS went further to say how the turtle program brought them job satisfaction and gave them something to look forward to coming to work. The increase in job satisfaction was so significant in this person that they gave the turtle program as a reason for motivation to come to work, as was a suspected impact mentioned by one of the LS.

Increases in job satisfaction such as this signifies how these programs have the potential

to help reduce staff turnover rates in prisons if there are enough staff involved in the programs.

The other DS at Larch expressed their joy in teaching other staff about the program.

I talk about it in meetings-how many turtles we have. Are we getting new ones...fun to be able to talk about fun things like that that are positive.

This DS expressed an increase in job satisfaction through increased positivity in the workplace. In addition, this is a great example of how the positivity can potentially spread to other staff members through the DS giving them a little taste of what is going on in the program during meetings and other interactions.

The DS at Cedar Creek reported similar positive experiences with the turtle program. They clearly described how the program reduces their stress levels. The following is a list of comments which make this case:

1. It eases tension all around.
2. It absolutely reduced my stress level.
3. It has no impact on my workload. It is nice to pull back from busy lives and electronics. It is very therapeutic. It is peaceful to go there in the elements, listen and see you all do your thing.
4. It got me out of the daily grind. I wasn't taking breaks before when I worked. This program made me get out of the unit and out into nature. It was a breath of fresh air and made a difference.
5. I get a lot more satisfaction in sustainability. When my regular job got frustrating and I needed a break I went to check on the animals.
6. It is relaxing to get away for a few minutes. Really enjoyed going out there and learning and exploring

All of these comments illustrate the stress reducing impacts and increased job satisfaction effects of the program on the DS at Cedar Creek. The DS see this program as a way to



escape from the typical prison work that can become repetitive, mundane and overwhelmingly negative.

Other impacts the DS reported at Cedar Creek was the switch from punitive to collaborative relationships with the residents. This relationship change was described as creating an increase in job satisfaction. In addition, this DS described how the learning opportunities in the program gave them enough information to be able to teach others, which was also described as a positive part of the program.

This DS also went on to say that they do not want to go back to not working with sustainability programs. They explained that they want to continue being involved in SPP programs whenever possible. The turtle program and programs like it are clearly important and valuable to this person.

I'm going to keep doing it and going to keep spreading it...SPP brings a whole new angle [for the residents] to help animals and learn new things. It makes a huge difference in behavior.

This particular person seems to have gained a great deal of job satisfaction and stress relief from the turtle program. They referred to times when they were not involved in SPP programs as more stressful and frustrating. The turtle program became their outlet when they were stressed or frustrated with their regular duties. This reveals a significant way in which programs like the turtle program have the ability to improve the quality of the work environment of staff members, particularly the staff who are directly involved.

Finally, both the DS at Larch and Cedar Creek expressed a feeling of satisfaction when making a contribution to helping the animals and the residents in the program; saying things like: "Being able to help an endangered species was pretty amazing."

And:

Having techs there and watching them evolve through the learning process and experience helping animals was very enlightening.

Please refer to the 'Prosocial Behavior' section under the subsection entitled 'contribution and empowerment' to learn more about the importance the DS placed on helping the environment.

One other revealing piece of the interview with one of the DS at Cedar Creek, was when they discussed the negativity from some of the staff at Cedar Creek. They explained that staff who have a negative reaction to the turtle program are bitter. This DS explained that this bitterness does not necessarily come from negative opinions of the program, as was believed by the LS, but instead comes from the feeling that DOC is going to try to overwork them if they get involved. The following their explanation of the feelings of these staff members:

The Department will use you for everything they can use you for. They are always worried about the bottom line. "Oh, [they] volunteered for something." Then they use you for something else and something else...until you are so burnt out you can't do your normal work. They [these staff members] feel like the state is taking advantage of them in any way possible.

Please see the 'Constructive Criticism' section of this paper for a more in depth discussion of possible solutions and ways to create a balanced workload.

***Chain reaction.*** The complex chain reactions described by both the LS at Cedar Creek and the LS and Larch did not explicitly carry over in the interviews with the DS. Instead, DS staff reported an improved sense of wellbeing as a result of working with the turtle programs. If there is improved staff wellbeing, it makes sense that the mood of the staff would improve and thus carry over to how the residents were treated. Although the staff did not explicitly mention this chain reaction, this doesn't disprove the claims of the

LS. Furthermore, one of the DS at Larch did describe a basic positivity chain reaction, saying:

I would say it was infectious. Their [the residents in the program's] positive interactions produced more positive interactions in myself, other staff and other offenders.

In addition, this DS at Larch also mentioned spreading awareness and communicating information about the program to the other staff and residents. They described it as a chain of communication. They talk to people and then those people talk to others and so on and so forth.

Although both of the chains described by this DS are not the more complex chains described by the LS, their responses do show that this DS feels that the turtle program spreads positivity and awareness throughout the facility and the DS feedback generally supports the idea of the chain reaction.

*Safety.* The DS at Larch and the DS at Cedar Creek had differing views on the impacts the turtle program has on safety and security in the prisons. The DS at Larch did not seem to have serious concerns with security or buy in from custody staff. They acknowledge initial concerns, but feel those concerns have dissipated as education and awareness of the program spread throughout the facility. On the other hand, the DS at Cedar Creek show some concern for the residents being mostly unsupervised while working with the turtles. In addition, the DS at Cedar Creek feel that the custody staff are more concerned with security than the DS, who are case managers.

One DS at Larch explained how the program had initial concerns for safety and how those concerns dissipated as this DS spread awareness to other staff members.

Initially, there were concerns regarding safety which goes with the fear of not knowing, but once the expectations were set, staff and offenders both simply just

wanted to see what happened next and became more inquisitive and started doing research on their own. I had quite a few staff and offenders come up and throw random facts out that they'd gone and looked up on their own (all staff-custody, counselors, admin, and even kitchen).

This DS seemed to feel the staff concern for safety was not because of issues with safety, but because of the fear of the unknown. The program is still fairly new at Larch and when it was first introduced, there was excitement and a willingness to learn. The awareness of the program seems to have spread rapidly at Larch. One DS felt that this rapid spread of acceptance of the program by custody staff in particular, was due to the way the information was communicated. For example, this person was able to communicate the program in a way that the custody staff could relate to and understand. This was also proven successful at Cedar Creek, when one DS created the Turtle Emergency Response Team (TERT), which was appealing to custody staff because, as the LS at Cedar Creek stated: "Custody folks love emergency response stuff!"

One concern that a DS at Larch mentioned was the concern for contraband in an unsupervised area. However, they explain that their concern is minimal, as they have not had any push back from custody staff. This DS makes sure to support any searches the custody staff want to do.

The only concern is this could be a great place to hide stuff, but haven't had a lot of criticism. I'm not having to fight. That's what makes it easy... "Whenever you need to do a search, just let me know." [What they tell the officers]

This DS adds that they feel the residents are on top of things in the turtle area. They still check up on them to make sure they are working, but overall they feel the residents are doing what they are supposed to be doing.

One DS at Cedar Creek expressed their concern for the security of the turtle program. They had concern for the residents being unsupervised and the potential for

contraband and escape. However, they also felt that the screening of the residents before being hired onto the program and the privilege of being able to work with the turtles helped to prevent any problems.

It impacts security. We have to screen to make sure we have the best of the best. They are not supervised out there. There is potential for contraband and escape. We are putting trust in them. The privilege is an incentive for them to do the right thing.

The other DS at Cedar Creek emphasized the positive impacts on the residents involved in these programs and how the program improves their behavior. This improved behavior leads to improvements in the safety and security of the prison. Learning and helping animals was particularly mentioned as something that improved the residents' behavior. This improved security may counterbalance the stress on the staff from concerns of contraband, as long as the residents continue to have good behavior while in the turtle building.

I would like to add here that there have been one or two incidents of contraband in the turtle buildings in both facilities and those residents had to be let go from the program. While very unfortunate, these incidences have not seemed to jeopardize the program and there seem to be several more examples of positive behavior than negative behavior in the turtle rehabilitators.

***Job opportunities.*** The topic of increased job opportunities was only mentioned by one staff person throughout all of the interviews, but the fact that involvement in programs like the turtle program impacted a staff member in this way, even if it is just one, is significant. This DS found that involvement in the turtle program, along with other SPP programs improved their likelihood of promotion. In particular, they felt that

their willingness to volunteer for their work with SPP showed initiative and increased their likelihood of a promotion because leadership values SPP programs.

In the review by the Department of Justice on the causes and impacts of stress in the prison work environment, the author discusses the impact of pay on job satisfaction. Jobs which have higher wages have been shown to increase job satisfaction (Finn, 2000) Although there are many other factors than can complicate this impact, the possibility of involvement in SPP programs increasing the likelihood of a pay raise sheds light on a potential direct link between SPP programs and increased job satisfaction in prison staff.

*Pride.* Similar to the LS at Cedar Creek, the DS at Larch expressed a sense of pride in the programs. They liked the feeling of sharing the programs and the positive actions that Larch is taking for the residents. One DS talked about their enjoyment of sharing the program during tours.

Media and visitors, they get excited about it. It's cool to have them realize the cool things we do here...how we get buy in and appreciation for the programs. This DS appears to gain job satisfaction through spreading the positivity of the turtle program to others.

Another DS at Larch explained how they get satisfaction out of seeing the turtle program publicized on social media and other media. They explained how when they search for news on Google and Facebook, the program showed up and they feel a sense of pride for being a part of something positive. This positive media attention seems to give this DS a feeling of connection with other prisons through their SPP programs as well as a sense of being a part of something good. This is significant, as one of the main

stressors identified for correctional staff in the review by Finn in 2000 was negative media attention.

They went on to explain their feelings of pride, ownership and a desire to show off their programs to others in the community.

When I go to the Zoo, I'm like "This is one of my programs, everyone, look!"

The DS at Cedar Creek did not explicitly discuss their feelings of program pride. However, one person mentioned their perception on how the facility feels about having sustainability programs in general.

Cedar Creek is known for sustainability now. We are happy about that and proud of it.

This DS seems to be referring more to the feeling of the prison as a whole and is reflecting the feelings that the LS shared in their interviews.

***DS Conclusion.*** Overall, the turtle programs at both Larch and Cedar Creek seem to have a positive impact on the wellbeing of the DS. These staff members appear to have a favorable association with the program, using words like "positive", "rewarding", "fun", "amazing" and "enlightening" to describe the programs. The LS and DS reported that the turtle program had positive impacts on the staff such as, increased job satisfaction, increased safety due to improved resident behavior, a feeling of pride in their work, positive media attention, improved job security and overall stress reduction.

All of the staff members spoke of the program in a positive way, however there was one major concern which was the issue of having the SPP Liaison position as a volunteer position. Adding more workload on top of the regular duties of a case manager was reported to add stress to their job. One solution to reduce stress would be to create a

full time sustainability position at both Larch and Cedar Creek. This position is currently being trialed at Larch. Please see the ‘Constructive Criticism’ section for more details.

**Indirect staff.** The indirect staff members who were case managers at Cedar Creek reported an overall increased sense of wellbeing in their involvement in the turtle program. The custody staff at Cedar Creek, who had very little involvement in the program, reported a neutral to positive impact on their wellbeing based on their involvement in the program; while the IS in a custody role at LS discussed a mix of negative and positive feelings towards the program. There were several differences in the experiences between case managers and custody staff at both facilities. In addition, the indirectly involved case managers at Cedar Creek felt that the custody staff had negative feelings towards the program, while the interviewed custody staff did not reflect these ideas.

***Punitive to collaborative.*** The IS at Cedar Creek discussed how the turtle and frog programs broke down barriers. One IS found that the punitive nature of the traditional relationship between staff and residents is reduced through collaborative learning in the turtle program. This IS told a story about the frog program as an example of how programs like these can break barriers.

I remember getting sent a health diagram for the frog program and was asked to call the frog techs into my office to look at the diagram on my computer screen. This was not prison related. It broke down a barrier.

Learning about the frogs together with the residents, and the feelings of the collaborative interaction are akin to the change from punitive to collaborative environment described by the LS and some of the DS. This IS at Cedar Creek, as well as one of Cedar Creek IS who is in a custody role, also felt impressed by the knowledge the residents in the program had about the animals they cared for. This relates back to how the LS and DS



described that the residents in the program gain respect from the staff through their expertise in the program.

The other IS case manager at Cedar Creek explained how the turtle program helps break down the barriers between the staff and the residents through reminding the staff that the residents are human beings.

I think it's good...good to have the inmates feel they are humans... Being in this work force, people who work for DOC, they forget that the offenders are human. It's a good time for them, when they are incarcerated, to have knowledge.

This IS feels that the animals give the residents an opportunity to show their humanity to the staff members.

Even the Cedar Creek IS in the custody role reveal an impact in seeing the residents as caring individuals.

Whether it's a turtle or the dog program, this not only gives the offenders a job, but gives them responsibility and something to generally care about while they are in prison. Most of the guys don't care about anything.

In this statement, this IS reveals that they do not feel most residents care about their lives and may point towards this IS losing the sense of the residents being human. However, it seems that, at least with the residents involved in the programs, this IS is starting to see these residents as more human - although this impact does not seem to have carried over to residents not involved in the program.

In contrast to the views of the LS and DS at Larch, the only IS interviewed at this facility, who was not a case manager [exact position not revealed for confidentiality purposes], did not discuss any impacts the turtle program had on collaboration. Although generally supportive of the program, this IS focused more on providing constructive criticism.

*Stress reduction and Job satisfaction.* The IS participants at both facilities had a significant amount of constructive criticism for the turtle program. In addition, two of the Cedar Creek IS who were case managers, described communication issues within the facility and explained that custody staff tend to have more negative opinions of the program than other staff. In addition, there were some feelings revealed about the discomfort in how the LS and staff at headquarters make a big deal about a program with a limited number of residents involved. These results of the IS interviews clearly show how the turtle program can impact the staff involved in a negative way with the frustration of not getting buy-in from other staff and the feelings of discomfort in the LS and staff at Headquarters showing off the program.

On the other hand, the IS-prison location is not revealed here for confidentiality purposes- explained that despite these issues, the turtle program does bring them greater job satisfaction and has overall positive impacts on their wellbeing. One IS in particular, who had a pre-existing interest in wildlife and nature, explained how the benefits of programs like the turtle program in carrying the nature from the surrounding Capitol Forest into the prison work environment.

When I ride to and from work, I always choose to go through the Capitol Forest. I have always done that since I started work at Cedar Creek. The connection between the sustainability programs at prison and driving through the forest...continues the magic.

This person goes further to explain that with the combination of the surrounding Capitol Forest and the sustainability programs in the prison, that

It really doesn't feel like I work at a prison - Minus the office work and regular duties of course.

They go further to explicitly state that the program "is not stressful, but stress relieving."

This person obviously gains job satisfaction from programs like the turtle program and adds later in the interview that the turtle program promotes a healing environment in the prison as a whole.

It is a healing environment. Even the thought of a program like the turtle program, seeing a poster on the wall about it or about sustainability...not something you typically hear about in a prison setting, although we are hearing about it more and more.

This IS feels the turtle program brings positivity and healing to the general atmosphere of the facility.

Another IS case manager at Cedar Creek explains the increase in job satisfaction they had while helping with the frog and turtle program.

I'm [says age] years old and interacting with the animals made me feel like a kid again.

This IS explained how interacting with animals in the program took them back in time and made them feel as though they were a child for a moment. This IS has a fear of animals, which places more power in this comment. Despite the fear they had, they still had a positive experience in the program. This fear of animals, is discussed further in the section on fear.

Despite the concerns of the case managers at Cedar Creek that the custody staff tend to have more negative opinions about the program, the IS custody staff who were interviewed did not support this claim. For example, one IS custody staff explained how their interactions with the turtle program have neither increased nor decreased their stress level in the prison. They claimed that the program helps with cooperation between the different staff member roles.

It hasn't directly impacted me at all. I work in a pretty busy position and I'm used to it. It hasn't impacted my stress level...It helps with cooperation between all

parties involved. It seems to be a pretty smooth thing, at least on custody's behalf.

The custody staff placed more emphasis on how they were happy with how smoothly the program operated rather than their feelings on what the program content was doing for the residents and the staff. This makes sense, because their role in the program is to assist with emergencies, provide escorts and assist in keeping a safe and functioning environment.

However, one IS custody staff at Cedar Creek did go on to express interest in the content of the program and the other IS custody staff discussed the knowledge they gained from the turtle program. The IS who expressed interest stated that they believed the programs with an environmental focus are very important and affect everyone.

Although this statement does not clearly portray any job satisfaction gained from the turtle program specifically, it does show that this person believes programs like the turtle program have value.

Larch interviews, on the other hand revealed an inverse miscommunication between case managers and other staff roles. Neither the DS case managers nor the LS [no IS case managers were available to be interviewed] did not think there were any negative feelings towards the turtle program from any staff members besides initial security concerns. In contrast, the non-case manager Larch IS did reveal their concerns for the additional workload the turtle program added to their responsibilities. Although they had these concerns, they went on to say that the switch from a case manager volunteering for the position of SPP Liaison to a full time sustainability position did help reduce some, but not all of the workload.

*Safety.* Speaking of the differences in the IS case managers and the IS custody staff, one would think that the custody staff would voice more concerns about safety than the case managers. On the contrary, the case managers at Cedar Creek seemed to have more safety concerns as well as concerns that the custody staff had safety concerns. The residents work outside of the gate in a building that is mostly unsupervised. There are officers that check in and there are surprise visits while the residents are working, but most of the time the residents are alone. This came up as a concern for three of the Cedar Creek case managers involved in the program and was not a concern for the custody staff participants. One case manager felt the need to increase security through having someone out with the residents at all times. This person was worried that with down time in the program, the residents could potentially jeopardize the program.

Another IS at Cedar Creek, who is a case manager, discussed how they were careful with who they recommended for the turtle program. They described how they were careful to screen so they did not get someone out there who would negatively impact the program.

I have never referred someone to the program as a behavior fix. It has always been due to interest in the program. Watching out during interviewing and screening is important. I fear that someone could so easily jeopardize the program... Need to be careful about who you would recommend to it.

Residents working with animals is something all prisons need to be careful with, especially when dealing with an endangered species. There is a screening protocol in place at both Larch and Cedar Creek in order to ensure the residents involved in the program do not have a history of violence towards people or animals and will be less likely to use the opportunity of being unsupervised to bring in contraband.

Another case manager concerned about contraband was focused primarily around custody staff finding contraband instead of the program being jeopardized due to concealed contraband. They stated that:

It [the turtle program] could spiral into being very negative [with the custody staff] with concerns of contraband unless there is more communication.

Another classification counselor expressed direct concern that the residents may jeopardize the program stating that they “don’t want them [the residents] sitting there doing something to jeopardize the program.”

The concern for the residents being unsupervised is present in the interviews with the Cedar Creek IS in the case manager role, but what about for the custody staff who are in charge of supervision and keeping the prison safe? The custody staff participants did not seem to be concerned. They are aware of the risk and there was initial concern, however they expressed over time the residents gained their trust. One custody member spoke of one particular resident:

[the resident] goes out and does his job and comes back. It’s built up trust between him and me. He obviously has a level of caring because he maintains good behavior...every time you or a counselor shows up, they are out there doing what they are supposed to be doing.

This IS, who was a custody staff member, also went further to say that they were not concerned with the security of the residents and the program. Instead, this IS felt the program improved security saying the program “Impacts security in a positive way in that it keeps them busy and out of trouble. This makes a safer and more secure place.”

This disconnect between Cedar Creek case managers’ concerns and the concerns of the custody staff was a common theme at Cedar Creek. This may be because the custody staff the counselors are referring to are people who have not been involved in the

turtle program in any way, and are therefore unaware of how the program operates, but this will be discussed further in the section on constructive criticism.

All of these concerns from the Cedar Creek IS who are in the role of case managers, could cause slight increases in stress at times. However, these staff members did not emphasize security of the programs as stress inducing. This may be because their concerns are something they have to deal with on a daily routine in other programs as well and it is just part of the job as a case manager. The IS who are in the role of custody staff do not seem to have imminent concerns for the residents jeopardizing the program. There may have been initial concerns, but for the most part, the residents have proved to be trustworthy.

*Fear.* On another note, the fear of the animals in the program was an issue mentioned in the Cedar Creek IS interviews. The fear of animals was not a common theme throughout for the staff members, but it is worth mentioning as fear was a very real concern for one of the IS. As mentioned earlier, not all people have positive interactions with animals, and as a result can develop a fear of that animal, which can result in negative impacts on both the animal and the person involved in an interaction (Banks and Banks, 2002; Carlst, 2009). This particular staff member spoke of their fear of animals and their experience in the frog program. They touched a frog for the first time, saying “I squirmed a bit.” They mentioned that their only other interaction with animals was in zoos and they had never touched them. In discussing their participation in the frog release, they said that they had never been in waters like that before because they had “always been kinda scared.”

Even though the frog program was different from the turtle program in many ways, I am including these experiences because they express the beginning stages of a shift that seems to have occurred with this particular staff member through a mix of interactions with the frogs and the turtles. Later in the interview, they expressed how they were surprised by the turtles.

I didn't know they [the turtles] were so...I didn't know they were so loving. I didn't know they would swim towards you. I didn't know they were friendly like that. I didn't know the environment was actually affecting them and their health.

Finally, they ended the discussion of their fears by saying:

I love nature and butterflies and I want to know more even though I'm afraid. Maybe it would make me not afraid. It's made me want to...I'm [gives age] and interacting with animals made me feel like a kid again.

After experiencing the combined interactions with the frogs and the turtles at Cedar Creek, this staff member seems to have stretched their boundaries and started to face their fears with positive results. They may not be completely over their fears, but they are open to the idea of not being afraid anymore. They also seem to have gained a sense of empathy for the turtles. They started relating "human" emotions to the turtles and expressed a new concern for the way the turtles' health is impacted by their environment.

This one staff member's experience and results of their experience is not enough evidence to say that the turtle program will help everyone overcome their fears.

However, this does show a potential for wildlife programs in prisons, like the turtle program, to help change people's minds and create empathy and compassion for animals among staff members. It shows that just because someone is afraid, it does not mean they will automatically have a negative experience with animal programs.



*Pride.* One of the IS seemed to have pride in Cedar Creek having the turtle program because they mentioned the reaction of the residents when they find out the turtle program is present at the facility. Although not explicitly stated, this IS seemed to have a sense of pride that novel programs like the turtle program existed as opportunities for the residents even though the programs were available to only a select few. However, another IS at Cedar Creek had mixed feelings on how that sense of pride was handled in the LS and at Headquarters. Although this was one person, there is a possibility that others feel this way too, and this may relate to the concern of many social and environmental justice activists of greenwashing. A brief discussion on the relationship between pride and greenwashing can be found in the ‘Constructive Criticism’ section.

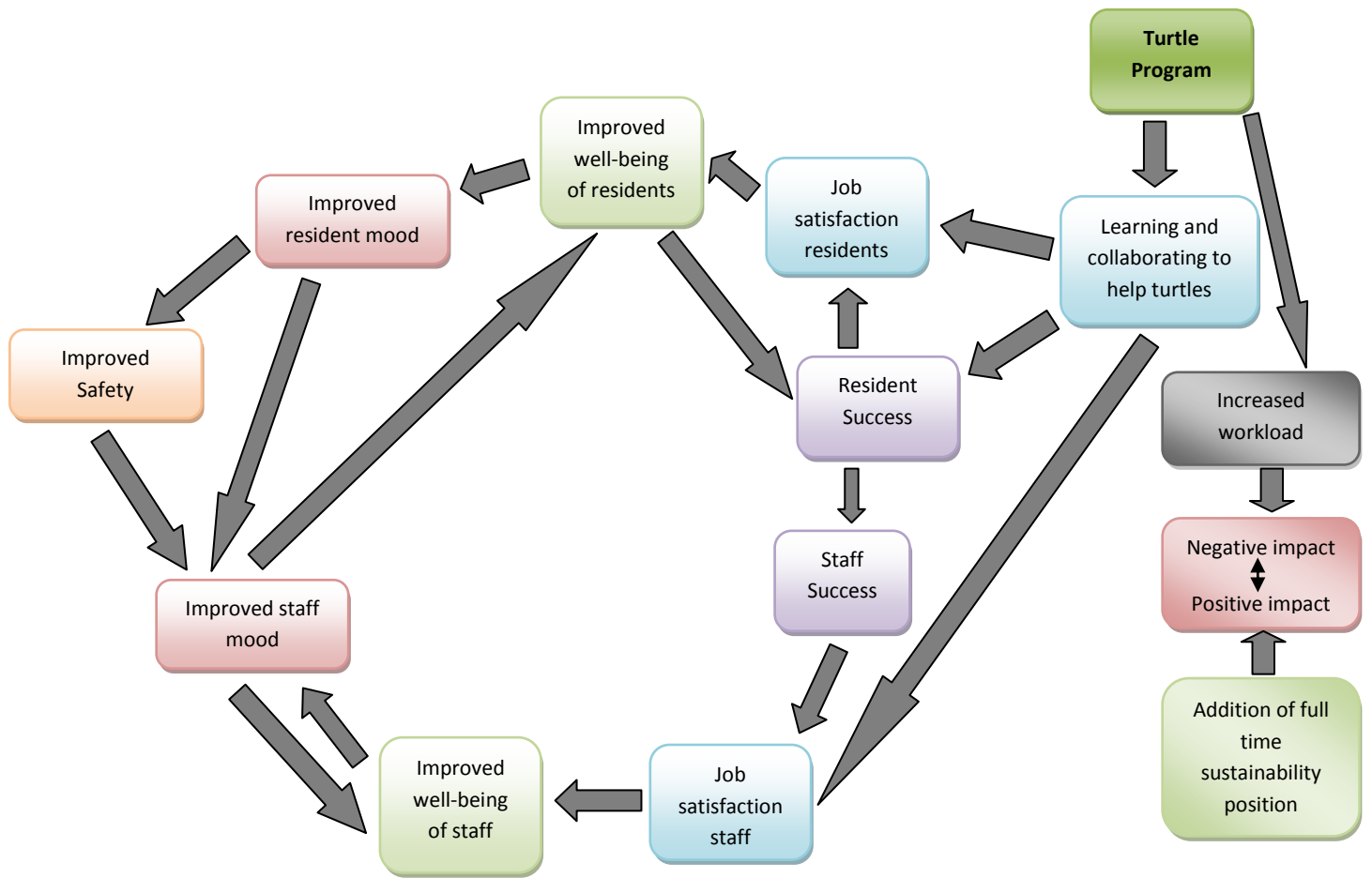
*IS conclusion.* Overall, the turtle program at Cedar Creek has a positive impact on the wellbeing of IS. These staff members have little involvement in the program. Most only had hands on experience with the program once. This indicates that this program is impacting staff that are not directly involved and may even impact staff who have not had any hands-on experience in the program. As one IS explained, just the idea that the program exists and seeing posters on the wall in the facility impacts them in a positive way.

On the other hand, through the interviews with the IS at Cedar Creek, it became apparent that there is room for improvement in the programs. The IS gave several suggestions as to how the program could be improved for staff members. A more in depth discussion of these suggestions can be found in the ‘Constructive Criticism’ section.

In addition, the IS in the case manager role agreed with the LS staff at Cedar Creek in that there is a struggle for custody staff buy in. After interviewing the IS, who are custody staff, this issue has either been resolved, there is a miscommunication or the custody staff I interviewed were not the staff who were not supportive of the program in the first place. Please see the ‘Constructive Criticism’ section for a more in depth discussion on the relationship between the custody staff and case managers and staff suggestions for improved communication.

**Staff wellbeing conclusion.** Most of the staff members reported overall positive impacts on their wellbeing from the turtle program. There are some concerns for security and workload, which impact the staff wellbeing in a negative way. However, the positive comments far outweighed the negative. This increase in wellbeing can be improved through acting on some of the constructive criticism that was given during the interviews. See the section on ‘Constructive Criticism’ for an in depth discussion.

The common theme of the positive impact of collaboration in the programs seems to lead to a positive chain reaction with some complications added with workload issues and differences in beliefs. Please refer to the figures below for a simplified visual on the summary of the overall impacts of the turtle programs at Larch (Fig.1) and Cedar Creek (Fig. 2).



**Figure 1. Summary of Staff Wellbeing Impacts of the Turtle Program at Larch Corrections Center**

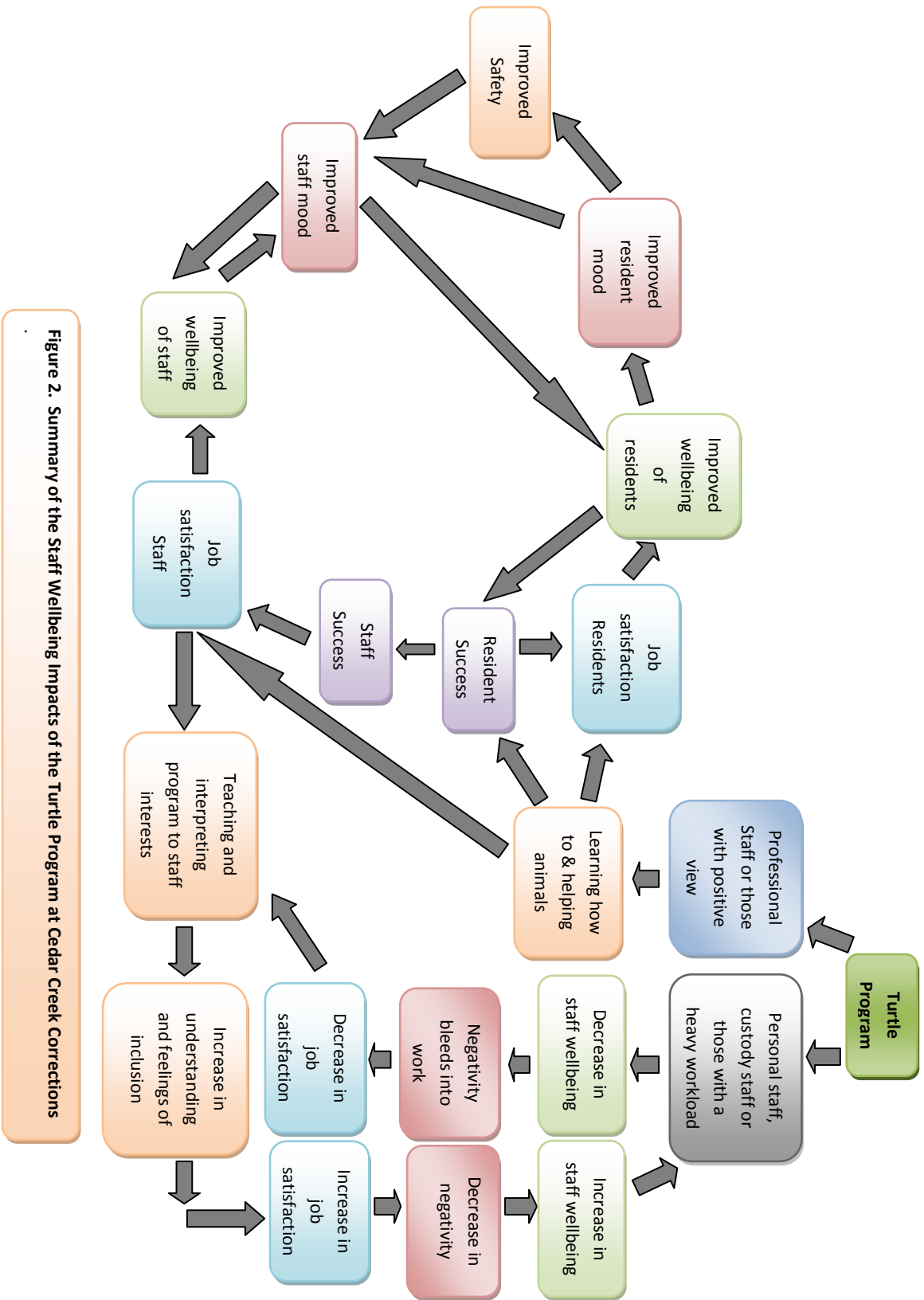


Figure 2. Summary of the Staff Wellbeing Impacts of the Turtle Program at Cedar Creek Corrections

Before we go on to the constructive criticism, there is one more significant theme to be discussed -prosocial impacts.

### **Prosocial**

**Leadership staff.** Prosocial behavior was a common theme during the interviews of LS at Cedar Creek and Larch. Prosocial behavior includes: improved communication, relationships, empathy and empowerment. As previously mentioned, particular staff at Cedar Creek were not as accepting of the program than others. Therefore, the program had either a neutral or negative impact on their prosocial behavior. The following sections pull out and discuss different themes related to prosocial behavior based on the interviews of the LS.

**Communication.** The two LS at Larch described improved communication in the facility due to the turtle program, however, they did hint at areas where communication could be improved. A powerful way in which communication has been improved is through the creation of a common new language for the residents and the staff to use. This new language is the language of science and nature. This allowed the sharing of knowledge, as opposed to the punitive form of communication where the people in charge direct the prison residents.

In telling how stories within the prison have changed with the addition of SPP programs in general, one LS at Larch gave an example of how communication has changed.

...not as many about drug busts or who got in a fight on the basketball court-more about experiences in these programs. “Do you know how many leaves we harvested?”... They [the residents in the program] get to share...

When this LS mentions the question “Do you know how many leaves we harvested?”

They are referring to a resident in the program who had approached them with that

question regarding the harvesting of plantain leaves for the endangered Taylour's checkerspot butterfly larvae. This LS stated that the stories from the residents change. The residents feel they have something to share and seem to have a sense of pride in their work. This ability to share with the correctional staff opens up friendly dialogue. This seemingly simple change has the potential to change the dynamics inside the prison through changing adversity into solidarity.

A similar communication impact was reported from the LS at Cedar Creek. One LS stated:

But they can talk the same talk. If the talk is about a common subject it relaxes the conversation. Talking about the corrections or the art of correcting people, creates conflicts. Communication is the biggest issue.

The other LS at Cedar Creek said: "Interests start evolving; it builds a spirit of cooperation around a centralized focus." Both of these statements explain the important role the turtle program plays in creating a new way for the residents and staff members to communicate collaboratively around a common topic.

However, as mentioned earlier, based on the reports from the LS and DS at Cedar Creek not all of the staff members may embrace the program. Thus, those staff members might not engage in two-way conversations with the residents. This may limit the scope of which the impacts of the turtle program and programs like it can spread throughout the prison. However, the overall impact on communication was reported to be positive at Cedar Creek.

Based on these interviews, the reported communication shift has happened on an individual level. The current programs would need to expand or new SPP-like programs would need to be added in order to have impacts prison wide. For example, Larch has

multiple SPP programs including: cats, dogs, plantains, house plants and - of course - turtles. Animal programs, like the turtle program are limited in their scope both because of program capacity and the requirements for the residents in the program to pass a screening to be cleared to work with animals. Other programs, such as house plants, have the ability to reach nearly every resident. More programs that are focused on nature, as well as adding more science education courses, could potentially shift the conversations to a dialogue in the majority of the prison and not the minority.

The turtle program is particularly small and limited in its capacity to make change, with one SPP liaison and three residents at a time. This program is also fairly new at Larch. Because the program is still in its infancy, some impacts on communication may not be apparent or happening at this facility yet. One LS at Larch touched on this issue, by describing how they were not sure whether the turtle program had an impact on how the facility was seen by other prisons.

I'm not sure. I would like to think that it has. I haven't had any calls about the turtles yet...I don't know if residents even know if we have a turtle program.

This LS also did not think the residents besides the turtle caretakers knew about the turtle program. Later in the interview, this LS went further to say:

But definitely for the people [that have] been involved in it. It's been a good thing- for the rest of them-out of sight, out of mind.

The other LS at Larch does not seem to agree with this LS. They describe how the residents in the program share with other prison residents.

The men go back and share with the others and then the others want to get involved. It's an important part of change.

This difference in opinion may imply that one LS was being careful to be clear on the program's limitations while the other LS was focused on communicating how knowledge

of the program spreads throughout the prison. The reality may lie somewhere in between, where the residents in the program do communicate with other residents in the prison, but the knowledge of the program does not spread to all residents.

One LS mentioned that the residents directly involved in the program benefit from the knowledge communicated to them, while the residents not involved do not gain knowledge. This LS may have been trying to emphasize the important role animal contact plays in communicating the message of the program to others. This program brings visual and hands-on communication between animals and humans into prison. This LS describes the importance of this communication of information when discussing how the program impacts staff members:

Once you get around them [the turtles], you can't help but care. When you get a chance to see them, all of the sudden you start to change the culture.

Although this particular quote is not about the residents in the program, this LS shares their views about the importance of being close to the animals, and that closeness aids in communicating the importance of the program and developing a sense of respect and empathy while caring for the animals. This lines up with the research by Clayton et al in 2008 on zoo visitor-animal interactions. This study showed the closer the proximity to the animal, the more visitors care about that animal and develop a desire to learn more (Clayton, 2008).

On another note, the other LS at Larch mentions another way the turtle program impacts communication in the prison. This LS expresses the way in which Larch holds the SPP programs at a high level of importance and how this communicates out to other prisons. This LS feels that if Larch continues to place SPP and SPP-like programs as a priority, that other prisons will follow. They state that:



It's important to me and the way we are approaching it makes it important to others as well.

This LS was referring particularly to the effort Larch had put into creating a new sustainability position to take on the programs instead of having a case manager take on extra duties voluntarily.

The LS at Cedar Creek also felt a sense of pride in their emphasis on the importance of SPP programs. Cedar Creek is where SPP began and, as a result, there is more of an emphasis on setting the guidelines and showing other facilities what can be done. However, this prison has not yet been able to create a full-time sustainability position. I will discuss this further in the 'Constructive Criticism' section of the results.

***Relationships.*** The theme of communication and collaboration led me to highlight some examples of how the turtle program has impacted different relationships. The following is a report on how the LS feel the program has impacted different relationships inside and outside of the facility.

*Staff-resident relationships.* A common theme of seeing the residents as more human rather than as offenders came up in all of the LS interviews. This is a powerful message of the change that the turtle program and other SPP programs are capable of having on a prison. There is a common narrative of prisons being a place where bad people go. One could imagine when placed in a punitive role of us-versus-them, there may come a time when that person in the putative role starts seeing residents as offenders identified as a number, rather than a name. Here are three examples of how this theme of resident humanity came up with the LS at Larch:

1. When you see them with a dog or cat or things like that, you start to see them as human. It used to be slave driver and slave.

2. That's how it was when I first started. That is breaking down. Treat people the way you want to be treated. It's hard to stay mad when they start becoming John Smith, not offender.
3. Initially when you have folks who have spent time working in prisons, they are like "What are you thinking bringing turtles in here?"...You can watch where the techs spout the information and what they are doing to care for these programs.

The first quote shows how seeing the residents work and care for animals - another living creature - in prison, suddenly more human. In the second quote, the LS explains their experience working in prisons before SPP-like programs and how the work environment has changed since these programs were introduced. This LS specifically mentions the change in seeing and treating the residents as human beings with a name rather than as an offender. Later, in this section, you will read about the DS at Cedar Creek who explains there are people who work in Washington State prisons who believe in poor treatment as a form of punishment that the residents deserve because of their crime. However, there does seem to be a transition happening with at least the staff who work with residents in SPP-like programs. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> quote, a LS at Larch explains how some staff were skeptical about the programs at first, but as time goes on, these staff change their minds when they hear the residents in the program talking about their program and telling them about the turtles.

In addition, one LS at Larch explained that it is not just the staff seeing the residents as more human, but the residents seeing the staff as more human.

Win for staff-less assaults-residents see staff as people too...makes you more human.

After being treated in a punitive way by staff members and expecting that, seeing the staff work with animals and working in a different and more collaborative way has the potential to change the resident's view of staff.

The LS at Cedar Creek also mentioned, albeit less directly, the impact on staff seeing the residents as more human. They placed more emphasis on seeing the residents as valuable collaborators, which seems to place a more human quality on the residents. It is a change in the traditional view. One LS stated:

Environmental factor is a lessening of the adversarial roles. If you and I are not adversarial, we have a better working relationship-allows us to work better outside of SPP programs too.... Not just about doing something negative...I might be coming to talk about frogs, turtles or fun events...

This LS is explaining the change in the relationship between staff and residents in the program; specifically in their roles to collaborate to make the programs successful. This LS saw an improvement in the relationships between staff and residents in the turtle program.

The other LS at Cedar Creek made a similar statement:

There is respect for the inmates in the level of skill being learned. This is true of any working relationship.

This LS explains that the residents earn respect from the staff because of the technical skills and knowledge that is required to care for turtles. In stating that this is "true of any working relationship" this LS seems to show their feelings that the resident-staff work relationship is equal to other working relationships. This may represent a shift in the LS point of view and, as a result, they may start to take the residents more seriously.

This brings us back to the topic of collaboration. The LS at both Cedar Creek and Larch agree the collaboration between staff and residents through working in SPP

programs, like the turtle program, seems to improve staff wellbeing. However, it also seems to improve resident wellbeing and thus improves the relationship between staff and residents as a whole. The residents and the staff members work together to reach a common goal. This develops respect and trust between the staff and the residents that directly work together.

In addition, the residents in the programs can gain satisfaction through caring for the endangered animals and take pride in their contribution to save an endangered species. Feelings of satisfaction and pride improve the mood of the residents, which, in turn, improves the mood of the staff members. As described by one LS at Larch, this impact is not only between the residents and the staff directly involved in the program, but impacts the relationships throughout the facility:

It improves the moral of the residents and therefore the interactions with the staff improves. The joy that they are feeling with those experiences impacts their interactions with staff and other residents.

On the other hand, in addition to the majority of positive impacts in the relationships between staff and residents at Cedar Creek, the LS also acknowledge that some of the staff members who feel negatively about the program may not treat the residents differently. The turtle program could either have a neutral or negative impact on staff-resident relationships in this case. These staff members will either keep having the same kind of working relationship with the residents as they did before or the staff could treat the residents directly involved in the program with less respect because of their association with the program. However, based on the previously mentioned comments on how even the staff who do not like the program see the benefits, the neutral impact may be more common.

According to one LS at Cedar Creek, residents developing a complex understanding for the turtles and gaining knowledge in program earns them more respect from the staff they encounter, saying that “There is respect for the inmates in the level of skill being learned.” As the residents gain knowledge, respect from staff has the potential to increase. This shows the possibility of programs, like the turtle program, to allow the residents to earn the trust of the staff on some level.

Trusting an incarcerated individual is a topic that needs to be approached carefully. There are strict boundaries staff members are trained to keep to promote prison safety and to avoid being manipulated by residents. The trust I am about to discuss is not blind trust. The residents in the program still need to be checked on just as frequently and there is still a need for staff to sustain boundaries. However, there does appear to be some level of trust built up once the residents have proven they can care for an endangered species successfully and do it under less than normal supervision. Both the turtle buildings at Larch and Cedar Creek are outside the fenced in units and away from constant supervision.

The Larch and Cedar Creek LS do not mention trust specifically, but they do mention being impressed by the skills the residents learn through caring for the turtles. Therefore, the residents earned the trust of the LS and the staff members based on the fact that staff trust the residents to do their jobs well. Trust comes up in a larger way in other staff members. See the ‘Relationships’ section of the DS and IS results for more information.

Overall, the LS at Larch and Cedar Creek agree that the majority of relationships between the staff and the residents have improved through the turtle program and

programs like it. This improvement is achieved through: collaboration, learning, resident success in caring for the animals and through the building of trust in the residents to care for the animals.

*Staff-staff relationships.* Relationships between correctional staff members and other correctional staff members were not directly mentioned by Larch LS, but were mentioned a few times by LS from Cedar Creek. One LS at Cedar Creek separated the staff members into two different categories - personal and professional. They then explained how the personal staff do not have a positive view of the turtle program because of their relationship with leadership in the prison.

Mostly from staff who are adversarial anyhow-because it was a source of pride for the [LS]. All they can think about is their relationship with the [LS]. It's not about the program. It's about their relationship with leadership.

This dynamic between the "personal staff" and the LS in the turtle program could do one of two things. It could reinforce the negative relationship and thus cause the turtle program to have a negative impact on how staff view LS. On the other hand, the LS discussed later that some of the "personal staff" cannot ignore the positive impacts of rehabilitating and releasing an endangered species has on the environment. Instead of reinforcing a negative relationship, the turtle program could create shared positive feelings for the program between the LS and the "personal staff."

The other LS at Cedar Creek discussed how even though there are some staff that don't always get along with other staff members, SPP programs promote a collaborative and calm atmosphere. The staff may have arguments, but they work together to problem solve to get a job done.

This LS also described how the turtle program created opportunities for staff in different programs to collaborate and work together in an unusual way. This LS was referring to when the turtle program was in need of a storage area and the building maintenance crew from Centralia College was inspired to help. Instead of building a standard shed, the building instructor and his crew worked together to build a shed with a turtle shaped roof.

It [the turtle program] has enough atmosphere that even maintenance jumped on board with the turtle shed. Added to vocational skills.

This collaboration between programs allowed staff to work together and thus create a new working relationship. This also allowed the residents on the building crew to gain insight into the turtle program and make a contribution to the program while also benefitting themselves through gaining new vocational skills.

*Staff-family relationships.* None of the LS at Cedar Creek or Larch directly mentioned any impacts the turtle program had on relationships between staff and their families. However, one LS at Cedar Creek did mention a direct impact the Oregon Spotted Frog (OSF) program had on their relationship with their child.

My [kid] went to college and was volunteering at [names wildlife organization]-hunting bull frogs because they were eating all the OSF. Being aware of Cedar Creek, I was able to tie in what I'm doing with what my kid wants to do in the future.

Although this is referring to the OSF program, this experience could have occurred with the turtle program. In addition, when the OSF program was in operation, the program was connected with the turtle program. This experience with the OSF program shows one significant way SPP programs, like the turtle program, could create a path for correctional staff to relate more to children with an interest in science. These programs

give the staff interesting knowledge to contribute to a conversation about endangered species and science with their children.

*Resident-resident relationships.* One of the LS at Larch mentioned one impact on relationships between the residents, which includes the sharing of knowledge between the residents in the program and the other residents. This would most likely be between those who the residents in the program are either friends with or who live in the same living unit. Spreading of knowledge to others in the facility could have many impacts. One impact could be the increase of scientific knowledge among the prison residents, another could be an increase in awareness of the issue of endangered species. These would both be positive relationship changes.

Another possible impact - which could be viewed as positive, negative or neutral depending on the person interpreting - could be that the residents in the program become infamous in the prison and gain a nickname, such as “The Turtle Guy.” This could be seen as a benefit to the residents in the program to be known for something positive or it could serve as a means for some of the residents to make fun of the residents in the program for being a quote unquote “nerd” or “animal lover.” To know the impact for sure, one would have to interview the residents in the program.

*Resident-family relationships.* While explaining why SPP programs were important to them, one LS at Cedar Creek brought up how SPP programs, like the turtle programs have the potential to impact the relationships between the residents and their family members.

1<sup>st</sup> word, sustainable-is something we should teach people...Sustainability is the basic premise of everything you want to do in life: relationship...job...



This LS felt that the concept of sustainability that is underlying in programs, like the turtle program, relates not only to the environment, but to a way of life. They feel that teaching sustainability to the residents teaches them to live their lives in a way that can be sustained. This means learning how to sustain relationships and jobs, for example. If this sustainability message is effectively carried out, it could potentially help the residents build a stronger and healthier relationship with their family and friends on the outside. The tricky part may be effective communication of how to live sustainably. Currently, there are no sustainability curriculums used specifically for the turtle program. There are certain sustainability themes which are incorporated in the readings, however, structured lessons on sustainability and connecting that to the lives of the residents does not currently exist and is an area of opportunity for improvement.

***Contribution and empowerment.*** There was a common theme discussed by LS at Cedar Creek and Larch of staff and the residents wanting to help the environment and the animals that are suffering due to humans. This need to contribute was underlying and preexisting. In other words, the turtle program did not create this need to contribute; instead, it gave both the staff and the residents the opportunity to fulfill that desire.

Personally I've never seen...when I was a little girl going to petting zoos-there were enormous turtles, but I had never been around other populations and species. The first time I saw one of the turtles when they first came in...they were so injured. It's a helpless feeling that you didn't know about this and didn't help them sooner. I didn't know enough to help them. Now I know they eat things like mealworms and their temp needs to be higher. I never realized this was a problem...it had a positive impact.

The LS at Larch who made this statement felt the need to help the turtles once they learned about the shell disease. At first, they felt helpless, but the program gave them the

means to make a difference. It provided them with an opportunity to fulfill their desire to contribute to positive actions on a larger scale.

This LS had a pre-existing appreciation for animals and has strong feelings about the wide range of benefits animal programs can provide, however, their focus before was mainly on cats and dogs. The turtle program seems to have opened up a new avenue to help animals and benefits the residents. This LS goes on to acknowledge that the opportunities for helping the environment are endless. They mention specifically the “broad spectrum of things we can do to lower our footprint”. The turtle program, as well as other animal and sustainability programs, seems to have empowered this LS through providing useful tools to make positive change.

The other LS at Larch describes how the programs are particularly helpful to staff that are interested in animals and have a desire to contribute.

I think it's been positive. Not only for the residents involved, but for the staff as well - especially for those who love animals and like to do something positive - turtles added to that.

Therefore, the program may attract staff members who are predisposed to having a need to contribute to either helping animals, helping the residents or helping the environment.

This could have many impacts on how the program affects the staff involved. This comment could mean that the programs are not changing anyone's minds because the staff coming into the program already have a nontraditional mindset. Another possibility could be that some staff go into the program with a desire to help nature or a desire to learn and while working in the program, their view of the residents shifts positivity. A hint to the answer to this question comes from the IS interviews later in this section.

The clear power in programs like the turtle program is its ability to empower both the staff and the residents to contribute through providing opportunities that are not traditionally present in prisons in the United States. One of the LS staff went into a detailed discussion on the benefits they feel SPP programs have on the residents.

SPP allows them [the residents] to relate to other creatures and also relate to their own life. There is a lot of stuff they can relate to their own life. The turtles are sick, injured and damaged and there is absolutely no one to care for them.

Creating a safe place for them where they can heal and recover-very similar to what we [the prison] do-it's a good way for understanding it's not all their fault as to why they ended up the way they did. They can really begin to see that you [the residents] were not given the best chances. This is an opportunity giving back what's been taken away. It the ability to give reparations, even on the smallest of things.

From the point of view of this LS, the residents are in prison often because they were not provided the right opportunities in life. They believe that all SPP programs offer an opportunity for the prison to help the residents understand this about themselves and give the residents an opportunity to succeed and do something positive.

The LS at Cedar Creek made similar comments on the benefits of making a contribution to the residents and the staff:

They hold value to everybody. The offenders get a sense of pride and give back to the community. For staff, it gives them the opportunity to impact something more than just prison-the environment. There is value to efforts to help environmental issues.

This LS emphasizes the tools these programs - like the turtle program - give to staff which allow them to have an impact on something more than just prisons. These tools allow staff to have a direct and positive impact on the environment and natural world.

On another note, the LS in particular seemed to feel a need to contribute positively and change the Washington State prisons for the better. A common theme in both the LS at Larch and the LS at Cedar Creek was their pride in the SPP programs they

had in their facilities and their desire to share these programs with other facilities. The SPP programs at Larch are still fairly new, but the LS believe they are approaching the programs in a more dedicated way by adding a full time staff member for sustainability programs. Cedar Creek was the first prison to ever have SPP programs, and thus, the LS at Cedar Creek feel a sense of pride for being the first prison involved. They feel that they helped lay the groundwork for the many other SPP programs to take off in other prisons.

*Empathy.* The final impact on prosocial behavior that appeared in the LS interviews was empathy. None of the LS staff directly mentioned the word “empathy”. Some aspects of the empathy results have already been discussed in the staff-resident relationship section. Particularly, I am referring to the part where the LS describe the staff and residents seeing each other as more human. One piece about empathy that the LS at Larch brought up that has not been mentioned, is the feeling of empathy towards the animals from both the staff and the residents.

While explaining how the residents benefit from caring for and being responsible for a living turtle, one LS referred to the turtles as people. After inquiring further, the LS explained why they used the word “people” to describe animals:

I don't view animals a whole lot differently. I like animals more than people. They have too many similarities. They breathe, they feel, they have emotions just like a person does. I think they experience loss. I think the research backs this up. Maybe they feel it in a different way, but they still experience it.

This LS believes that animals share many similarities emotionally to humans and that they can relate to animals in this way. When people realize that animals have emotional intelligence, they may find they can relate to the animals on a deeper level. This LS relates animals to children and hints to the residents gaining empathy and parenting skills

from working with the turtles. In discussing the release of the turtles back into the wild, this LS states that watching the residents is “like watching a parent watch their kid go off to college.” While describing the shell disease and how the residents care for the turtles, they say:

The turtles remind me of a toddler that has a belly ache, but doesn't know why. The techs help them feel better.

If the residents also see the turtles as children, one could imagine residents gaining empathy and parenting skills from caring for the turtles. However, a follow up study on resident program participants would be needed to understand the impacts on the residents in the program. If caring for turtles does build empathy, then the residents might start to have more empathy for the prison staff and other residents, as well as empathy for themselves and their family on the outside.

Another LS at Larch describes the personalities all animals have and the feelings relationships that animals and humans can develop with each other feel good.

Watch any animal for a long period of time, they have personalities. Makes you feel good that you can relate to them and they can relate to you.

This LS feels that relating to animals, or feeling empathy for animals, has the potential to give an individual positive feelings and brightens their mood. This LS particularly refers to the animals in the prison - specifically their experience in the dog program - having the ability to put the staff in a better mood and thus treat the residents better.

In addition, this LS at Larch describes their pre-existing feelings of empathy and about their thoughts on how to treat residents:

The people in prison are broke. We are all a little broke...it's not our job to punish, it's our job to help-find out what their [the resident's] needs are. We give them a purpose.

This LS was saying that through all SPP programs, the prison is given a toolkit to help the residents find a sense of purpose. It gives the LS one way to act on their empathetic feelings towards the residents in a positive way.

In conclusion, many of the LS had pre-existing feelings of empathy towards the animals and residents. The turtle program and other SPP programs, like the dog and cat programs, give the LS one set of tools to act on their feelings and facilitate the growth of empathetic emotions in the residents and staff through helping the animals.

*LS Conclusion.* Overall the LS at both prisons claimed that the turtle program and other SPP programs increased staff's prosocial behavior with other staff members and the residents. The program was reported to increase communication between both staff and residents, however, better communication is needed to spread awareness of the turtle program amongst more people in the facility. Close encounters with the turtles was said to be the most effective way to raise program awareness. There was an inherent need for the LS at Larch in particular to contribute to resident success and the environment. This program provided a way for the LS to fulfill that need. At Cedar Creek in particular, there was an increase in job satisfaction amongst the LS and in the overall atmosphere of the facility.

In addition, the relationships between staff, residents and their families was said to be impacted in a positive way. The staff gained knowledge and job satisfaction in the program, which they brought home and share with their families. The residents gained knowledge and respect in the program and the staff start to see the residents as more human. This empathy gained by the staff and their pre-existing empathy and desire to impact the animals and the residents in a positive way places an importance for the turtle

program to provide that opportunity. With this increase in prosocial behavior, comes better communication and respect inside the prison facility. If these responses from the LS are a good representation of the impacts of the turtle program, this could have a great positive impact on the job satisfaction of staff members and prison safety.

**Direct Staff.** DS from both Larch and Cedar Creek spoke of a common theme in which the turtle program supported and increased prosocial behavior in staff and residents. The prosocial results from the DS interviews on this topic differed slightly from the results from the LS. The most likely explanation is that DS have more direct, face-to-face interactions with the residents and the turtles than the LS. The DS have experience working with the residents on at least a weekly basis. This allows the DS to develop a working relationship with residents instead of a purely supervisory relationship. The following section describes the pre-existing prosocial behaviors of the staff and the prosocial behaviors that seem to have developed with the assistance of the turtle program.

**Relationships.** The following sections break down the different impacts the turtle program have on DS and the residents in the programs at both Larch and Cedar Creek.

**Staff-staff.** The DS at Larch reported a more positive impact on the relationships between staff members than the DS at Cedar Creek. The DS at Cedar Creek reported negative relationships with some staff because those staff did not support the turtle program and thus were not supportive of the DS; whereas the DS at Larch reported a positive impact on their relationship with other staff.

Both of the DS at Larch explained that all staff at Larch showed support of the turtle program. They did say that there were some initial concerns for safety with the

residents being mostly unsupervised while in the turtle building, but the concerns seemed to dissipate as the awareness of the program and its importance spread throughout the prison. One DS at Larch explained that the key to the overwhelming amount of positivity towards the program was due to the way the program was interpreted to the other staff - whether it be custody, case managers, or maintenance. The program was explained to each staff in a way that was relevant to them. This caused staff who were not involved in the program to become excited. This DS described the excitement when the turtle program first started:

...staff and offenders both simply just wanted to see what happened next and became more inquisitive and started doing research on their own. I had quite a few staff and offenders come up and throw random facts out that they'd gone and looked up on their own (all staff-custody, counselors, admin, and even kitchen)

The DS said the other staff became interested in helping and supporting the program. This excitement, sharing of knowledge and helpfulness between staff members seems to have impacted the relationship between DS and other staff members in a positive way.

On the other hand, the DS at Cedar Creek reported positive relationships with people other staff who are supportive of the program, but negative noted a negative impact on relationships with staff who were unsupportive of the program. The DS reported a need for more effective communication to other staff not directly involved in the program. They also reported they felt some staff members' minds would not be changed. Staff whose minds are against the program may feel that the residents do not deserve anything except punishment or just not be well educated about the purpose and impacts of the program. The DS believe that staff who do not understand the program but believe the residents deserve opportunities in prison can be.

One DS at Cedar Creek reported:



Most people who work at prison don't realize it's more than turtles. There needs to be more connection. People need to know that this program equips the techs with prosocial behaviors and skills that try to equip them for when they go out.

Please see the section on 'Constructive Criticism' for a more in depth discussion on the need and possible solutions for better communication and improved relationships between the DS and other staff at Cedar Creek.

*Staff-community.* Cedar Creek DS did not discuss direct impacts between themselves and their community. Whereas, one Larch DS discussed this a great deal.

This DS talked about how they see the media on the turtle program on Facebook and at the Oregon Zoo and share it with their family. The positive media attention gives them a sense of pride and an opportunity to engage and educate their friends, family and the community as a whole on the positive prison program they are involved in. This DS talked about the enjoyment of describing the turtle program to an acquaintance and the acquaintance being shocked and excited that a program like that existed inside a prison.

This DS seemed to gain a great deal of satisfaction sharing their knowledge about the program. They said:

It's fun to talk about. We are only one of two that have this program. It broadens understanding...people take that back and talk to their friends and family.

This DS went on to say that spreading the word of this positive program not only starts to change the view of the prison, but also starts to change the community's' view of the residents. This is an interesting point that no other staff members mentioned in the interviews. The impact on media attention on the prison as a whole was mentioned several times, but not the impact on the view of the community on the residents. The media could potentially help communities see the value in the resident population.

*Staff-family.* Both the DS at Larch and Cedar Creek discussed impacts of the program on their relationships with their families. The DS who described the impact on their relationship with the community, above also mentioned one impact between them and their family. The turtle program gave this staff a sense of pride as well as something to share and talk about with their family.

On another note, one DS at Cedar Creek discussed bringing the things they learned in the program back to their family in the form of environmental action. This person was inspired by climate change discussion groups held between the turtle program SPP Student Coordinator, SPP Student Coordinators from other programs, the residents and the SPP Liaison. This DS had previous education in sustainable practices, but did not have many people in their life that shared those values. They described the turtle program experience as good reminder of these values. This staff person's family is not supportive of taking positive environmental actions, so their worm bin they installed may not have a positive impact on their family relationship. Nevertheless, this DS seemed excited about the changes and potential that they will be able to get their families buy-in in the future.

*Resident-family.* Only one DS at Cedar Creek mentioned the impact they felt the turtle program had on the relationship between residents in the program and their families. This DS stated:

This program is awesome. It gives the techs compassion to take home to families and their lives. It's not just turtles.

This quote not only touches on the topic of the program impacting the relationship between residents and their families in a positive way, but also touches on the empathy

the staff report the residents gaining from this program. See the DS section on empathy for a more in depth discussion.

*Resident-resident relationships.* One DS at Larch talked about the impact the turtle program has on the relationships between residents in the program and residents outside the program several times throughout the interview. This DS described the infectious positive attitude of the residents in the program carrying out to other residents. In other words, when the residents in the program come back from working with the turtles, this DS feels they come back with a positive attitude and that positive attitude impacts the other residents and the entire atmosphere of the prison.

This DS also described their observations of the relationship between two of the residents in the program. They explained that the two residents in the program were very different from each other and that the program brought them into a work environment where they needed to work as a team towards a common goal.

The two [residents]... came from two completely different backgrounds. Bringing them together and watching them collaborate and learn; I could see their stress greatly reduce. Gave them a more positive outlook on life.

The fact that this DS describes this relationship between the residents as stress reducing and positively impacting their outlook on life for the residents signifies potential for the turtle program to impact the behavior of the residents in a positive way. If the residents are less stressed and more positive, their behavior would likely improve and thus improve the safety of the prison. In addition, watching this positive relationship develop between the residents seemed to bring job satisfaction to this DS, as they felt the program they were running was helpful.

*Staff-resident.* The DS at both facilities reported overall positive impacts of the program on the relationship between the residents in the program and themselves. The DS at Larch that discussed the resident's positivity in the program also discussed that the program gave them job satisfaction because it gave them time to get to know the residents on a professional level. This DS felt that spending time with the residents in the program allowed them to be more successful at their job because it allowed them to gain a better understanding of the needs of residents. The other DS at Larch had a slightly different response. This DS seemed to not have as much faith in the capabilities and trustworthiness of the residents. At the same time, they discussed how the residents were good communicators and how important it is to treat the residents with respect and like human beings preparing to re-enter the community. This was a subtlety that can be interpreted a number of ways. Given this DS has doubts about the capabilities and trustworthiness of residents, this person may be in a transitional process of figuring out how to collaborate with the residents as partners in the program. They did mention this being a challenge:

Yeah, it's funny...have to find a balance of being respectful [towards residents] and understanding and also hold them accountable.

This DS at Larch also discussed the other prison staff roles they had been in and how the residents reacted to them differently in each role. They explained the strictly punitive roles as causing negative interactions with the residents. Involvement in the turtle program was a positive change for this DS because the residents view them as more positive. Therefore, the program seems to have a positive impact on the relationship between this DS as well as a positive impact on job satisfaction.

One DS at Cedar Creek focused on the impact the program had on their view of residents and how this impacted their relationship with the residents. This DS explained that working side-by-side with the residents in turtle program and other SPP programs, played a role in helping them to see and treat residents as humans.

I was trained in keeping certain barriers and although they are human you can't interact on a personal level. Finding offenders interested and willing to work-I knew they were human. I knew I was supposed to treat them differently. This was a step forward from that. Treat them as individuals and not just offenders.

Seeing this humanity in the residents not only helped them be more positive towards residents, but also helped the residents see humanity in the DS.

The best compliment I have ever gotten was from an offender on my caseload who was not getting out until 2053 if ever. He said "I can't believe you just talk to me. It's just a humanity." He is articulate and intelligent, but couldn't even get it out. He has been treated as scum, not as a human.

Seeing the humanity in the residents seems to have the potential to significantly improve relationships between the residents and the staff. This improvement could be especially helpful for case managers, because if the case manager is viewing the resident as an individual and a human being, they might be able to assist the residents with programming and re-entry in a more effective way that is tailored to that particular individual.

The other DS at Cedar Creek also reported a positive impact on their relationship with the residents, but did not go into detail. This person specifically mentioned the residents in the program coming into their office to ask questions about the program.

This seemed to bring this DS job satisfaction through breaking up their usual routine and discussing topics not related to prisons.

*Partnerships.* There are many partnerships which make the turtle program possible. These partnerships include Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), Oregon Zoo (OR Zoo), Woodland Park Zoo (WPZ), and PAWS Wildlife Rehabilitation Center (PAWS). Both the DS at Larch and Cedar Creek discussed benefits gained from relationships with partner organizations.

One DS at Larch explained when the partners come in to visit the program and check up on the turtles, they bring educational opportunities. These learning opportunities give the DS more information to share with other staff and partners. One of the DS at Cedar Creek also mentioned the knowledge gained from the visiting partner organizations. They had a focus more on the emotional knowledge gained - such as compassion and empathy- rather than factual knowledge. They described how the veterinarian from WDFW who visited the program helped to teach empathy towards the turtles to the residents involved in the program:

It was really cool to see the doctor come out and explain that she would not be cleaning out the wounds entirely without pain medication. It teaches the technicians that the turtles feel pain just like we feel pain. The care she had handling them. They are like people, they are like children.

Watching this interaction between the residents in the program and the veterinarian seemed to give this DS appreciation for outside experts. In this instance, the DS appreciated the important knowledge the residents were gaining from the veterinarian.

The knowledge that was shared by the veterinarian was that all living creatures feel pain, just like you do and that all creatures deserve respect, compassion, and empathy. This is a helpful lesson on empathy that may help a resident with challenging times during parenting.

*Contribution and Empowerment.* Like the interview responses from the LS at Cedar Creek and Larch, the DS at both facilities described the turtle program as having a positive impact on their ability to contribute to something on a larger scale and empower them to make meaningful changes. For example, one DS at Larch described how the turtle program, and other SPP programs, helped bring an awareness of their environmentalism. This newly discovered knowledge led them to spread environmental awareness to others and become a kind of activist inside the prison though encouraging people to compost, use less water, et cetera.

The things they learned from working in the turtle program empowered the DS to make a difference and share their knowledge so others could make a difference too. One DS at Larch stated:

I can talk to people and they talk to people-it's a chain.

Like the LS, the DS seemed to have a pre-existing desire to make a positive contribution to the residents and animals. This program gave them a means to make a tangible positive impact. The prison work environment was described as being redundant and frustrating. This program seemed to allow the DS at Larch and Cedar Creek to put their energy into something that was positive and rejuvenating.

In addition to using the turtle program to contribute positively to the prison environment, the DS at Cedar Creek reported being empowered by the environmental education piece of the program to make change in their personal lives outside of prison. They started making changes in their own home to live more sustainably in the face of climate change. One DS who emphasized this impact explained they had previous

knowledge of sustainability, but that knowledge was reawakened after discussing climate change with the residents in the turtle program. This DS went on to state their belief that:

We need to do all we can to keep the planet safe for our children, the animals and everything on this earth.

The other DS at Cedar Creek shared this pre-existing interest in helping the environment, but also found themselves to be empowered to contribute in a way they never thought was possible before. This DS stated:

I've always been interested in, but I didn't think I could ever impact an endangered species. Now that I know, I know I can get involved any way I want to. I started looking stuff up. They're doing plantings right by the river here in fact!

This quote shows how the program made this DS feel empowered to make a difference and opened up a whole new world of opportunity to help the environment and the animals living within it.

Contributing to the environment was not the DS's at Cedar Creek's only interest. They also showed a serious interest in helping the residents in the prison. The DS at Cedar Creek discussed how the program helped the residents learn, gain experience, increase prosocial behavior and build empathy. One DS stated

You are giving them the experience and help they need. The experience they are getting from this, with these turtles, is just a small portion of the experiences in the program.

This DS was expressing their thought of the program as a means to assist the residents in a successful re-entry. The DS at Cedar Creek feel this program is a means to make a positive impact on the behavior and success of the residents in the program.

***Empathy.*** In addition to the change from seeing residents as offenders to seeing them as individual human beings, the DS staff at Cedar Creek also reported pre-existing



feelings of empathy towards animals. This is similar to the previously discussed report from some of the LS. One of the DS described the similarities between humans and animals and how the turtles needed to be cared for like a human child, as with other animals. They explained that we all have the same basic needs and in this sense the turtles are able to teach the residents empathy through caring for them.

***DS prosocial conclusion.*** There were overall positive impacts on prosocial behavior discussed during the interviews of the DS at Larch and Cedar Creek. There were pre-existing prosocial behavioral tendencies apparent in all of the DS and the turtle program seemed to give them a way to act on and embrace those tendencies; such as being empathetic and helping through positive contribution. Although there was some pre-existing empathy, a deeper level of empathy and respect for the residents seemed to develop with program participation. The collaborative environment of the program led the DS to start to see the residents as more human rather than offenders. Many of the relationships between staff, residents, the community and families were impacted in a positive way. However, negative impacts were reported at Cedar Creek. Some of the staff have negative opinions about the turtle program and thus share that negativity with the staff involved in the program. This may be partially counterbalanced with education and interpretation, but the DS feel that some people will not be won over because of their strong opinions. However, overall there was an overwhelmingly positive impact on the prosocial behavior of staff from the turtle program.

**Indirect Staff.** As expected, the IS who were interviewed did not report as many prosocial impacts from their involvement in the turtle program than the LS and the DS. In addition, the impacts they reported were equally split between constructive criticism and

positive impacts. Again, the majority of IS interviewed were from Cedar Creek, with only one IS from Larch. The interviews offer a better picture of the views of the IS at Cedar Creek than from Larch. The following section describes the prosocial impacts from the point of view of the IS with a focus on the complex relationships at Cedar Creek between custody and case managers.

***Relationships.*** There was a difference between the views of the IS staff who were in the role of case managers and the IS staff who are in a custody role. Custody staff members refer to those in charge of security and emergency response. Case managers are in charge of a certain number of residents on their caseload: this involves knowing and assisting residents through their casework and assigning them to different educational programming and jobs. The following section on impacts of the turtle program on relationships breaks down the different viewpoints between custody and case manager IS.

***Staff-staff.*** The IS case managers at Cedar Creek reported positive views of the program, but also explained that in particular, custody staff members seemed to have negative views of the program. One IS said how they think the custody staff do not see importance in the program because they do not see the results of the program:

The impact on the officers...they don't like it. They don't see how it affects the offenders. They don't see how it benefits them.

When I asked them how this might be changed, they said:

It would be very hard. I don't know that it can change. It's not a part of their program. They are so used to seeing them [the residents] as liars and untrustworthy. We all make mistakes in our lives. We can't continue to discredit them because they are human. They [the officers] really need to learn to be humble. Whatever they say, I see them take whatever is going on in their lives out on the offenders. The only way the offenders are going to learn is through us. We are their models. It's not good to model negative behavior and expect them to go out in the community and be humble. We have to be their light.

This IS believes that custody staff members do not think highly of the turtle program and are not aware of the positive things the program is doing. Based on the feedback from this IS, there seems to be a disconnect between the case managers and the custody staff. It was not made clear if this claim was based off of certain custody staff members or was an overarching claim about all custody staff.

However, the custody staff who were interviewed at Cedar Creek do not appear to have negative feelings towards the program. Although, these are the custody staff who have been exposed to the program on some level, so maybe there is negativity coming from other custody staff members who were not interviewed for this research. Nevertheless, the custody staff who were interviewed had an overall positive view of the program. Even though their roles in helping with the program were small, they are important. The custody staff interviewed felt responsibility for the program. One custody staff explained that they felt the turtle program helped with cooperation amongst staff members involved in the program. They also commented on their appreciation for how smoothly the program runs on the custody side of things. In addition, they acknowledged there was an initial issue with the custody staff not understanding the purpose of the program:

A lot of staff now understand the importance of the program. They didn't understand and now they do.

However, when asked what they knew about the program, this IS responded:

To be honest, not much, but I know about how they survive in the environment and that they are tracked and numbered.

I believe this response points to the importance of program interpretation. Even though this staff member knew very little about the program, they did know information they

could relate to, such as the turtle tracking system. This tracking system can be related to the numbering system used to keep track of the residents in the prison. Although this may seem cold or disengaged with the goals of the turtle program, the numbering system grabbed the attention of this custody staff member. It is important to note that this custody staff member also noted they believe environmental programs are important in the prison and that anything positive the prison can do to help the environment is beneficial to everyone.

The other interviewed IS who works in custody at Cedar Creek shared similar views of the turtle program. This IS also explained that they developed a trust in the residents in the program to be unsupervised and still do their job - what they are supposed to do. This counteracts the previous case manager statement that officers feel that all residents are untrustworthy. This IS went further to say that:

[The turtle program] Impacts security in a positive way in that it keeps them busy and out of trouble. This makes a safer and more secure place.

Therefore, this IS appears to feel positively about the program and the residents in it.

This seems to counterbalance some of the ideas the case manager had about the views of the custody staff. However, the following quote indicates that some of the views may pertain to this custody staff in some ways, but the program may be a start to changing their opinions about the residents:

Whether it's a turtle or the dog program, this not only gives the offenders a job, but gives them responsibility to generally care about while they are in prison. Most of the guys don't care about anything.

This IS makes the claim that the majority of residents in the prison do not care about anything, but the residents in the turtle program do. This implies that it is possible for the

custody staff to see the more human qualities in the residents because they care and nurture the turtles.

It may seem as though this section has gotten off topic from the relationships between staff members, however, it is important to note that there are contradicting viewpoints between the case managers and custody staff. The contradictions represented by these two groups of staff - who were indirectly involved in the programs - represents a disconnect and need for better communication between the case managers and the custody staff at Cedar Creek. If communication was increased, the staff roles would realize their shared values and possibly open up the opportunity to engage those who may have a negative view of the program. See the section on 'Constructive Criticism' for a discussion on possible solutions to this problem.

After interviewing one IS at Larch who was a custody staff member, there was also a disconnect revealed between the custody staff and case managers at Larch, however, the miscommunication was quite different from the one revealed at Cedar Creek. At Larch, the case managers believed the custody staff had only negative view of the program and the custody staff reported positive views of the program. The case managers at Larch reported the custody staff as having positive views of the program, while the custody staff member interviewed reported the program having a negative impact on their workload. The IS at Larch felt the turtle program was positive, but there were challenges. They felt the program added to their workload and that the prison's structure was not made to house animals. These were challenges that this IS seemed to be willing to work with, but challenges nonetheless. This indicates the need to open up

more dialogue between custody staff and case managers at Larch as well in order to address concerns thoroughly and come up with solutions.

*Staff-family.* Only one IS at Cedar Creek explained that their involvement in the turtle program impacted their relationship with their family. It gave the IS an opportunity to share knowledge with their family. The IS explained that they always had an interest in nature and being outdoors, but after experiencing the turtle program, they would stay longer in certain areas in nature to observe in order to try to catch a glimpse of a turtle with their family. This IS also showed interest in learning more about other opportunities to share the turtle program with their family. The program has opportunities to improve educational outreach for IS interested in learning more about SPP.

*Resident-family.* Two of the IS at Cedar Creek mentioned how the turtle program may improve the relationship between residents involved in the program and their families. One IS described how the knowledge of the turtle program has spread throughout the facility. They mention that the program is included in family friendly events and the annual science fair at the prison. Another IS mentioned how the turtle program gives the residents in the program knowledge to pass on to their children. Both of these impacts could potentially improve their relationship with or at least give the residents something new to talk about with their families. This could increase the wellbeing of the residents and thus improve their attitude or behavior towards the staff.

*Staff-resident.* At Cedar Creek, the turtle program appears to have a positive impact on interactions between IS and residents who are in the program... For example, one IS in the role of case manager at Cedar Creek, explained that the turtle program broke down a barrier between this IS and the residents:

I remember getting sent a health diagram for the frog program and was asked to call the frog techs into my office to look at the diagram on my computer screen. This was not prison related. It broke down a barrier.

In other words, like the LS and the DS have described, this IS felt that the turtle program helped to break up the prison routine. This IS feels this is refreshing and opened up an opportunity for an interesting conversation and learning opportunity between the residents and themselves.

In addition, another IS at Cedar Creek showed that they felt the program gave the residents an opportunity to feel and be viewed as humans. They explained how some staff members forget the residents are human and this program is a good reminder and awakening:

I think it's good...good to have the inmates feel they are humans; that they're not bad people. Being in this work force, people who work for DOC, they forget that the offenders are human. It's a good time for them, when they are incarcerated, to have knowledge. Being around animals connects us to the world.

This IS the interaction between the animals and the knowledge the residents gained from the program brought out the humanity of the residents. The other IS at Cedar Creek in the role of case manager agreed, saying:

It is a link to something that is more human even though it's turtles...figure that out!

This was important to this IS because they felt this helped staff members who may have forgotten that the residents were human remember. This IS possibly improved how staff not involved in the program treated residents. This IS felt that the job of all staff members is to demonstrate what prosocial behavior looks like and treating the residents poorly sends an unproductive message to the residents.

The IS at Cedar Creek in the role of custody staff seemed to reflect the result of this reminder to some extent. One of these IS discussed how they began to trust the residents in the program. They were impressed that every time myself, as the SPP student coordinator, or the SPP Liaison went out to the turtle building, the residents were doing what they were supposed to be doing, even without supervision. This IS also mentioned how they saw these residents obviously cared about the turtles, and thus they viewed the residents as caring. This IS did not feel other residents shared this level of caring, but for the individuals in the program it made a difference.

The other IS at Cedar Creek in the role of custody staff was impressed by the knowledge the residents had in the program. As a result, this IS began to respect the residents. They explained that the residents were so well informed about the protocols in the program, that it made responding to any emergencies go smoothly. They stated that they “have been surprised and impressed by the knowledge the technicians have.”

On another note, the one IS at Larch in the role of custody staff felt that the program had little to no impact on their relationship between themselves and the residents in the program. They did mention that they sometimes ask the residents about how the program going, but that was only to engage them in conversation while inspecting the building. This IS explained that they were interested in the program and always has been, but did not want to get involved because they were being careful to set boundaries. In other words, they did not want to be taken advantage of and overworked. This goes back to the topic brought up by one of the DS at Cedar Creek. There seems to be a common concern that WADOC will take advantage of people who show initiative and volunteer to



help with projects outside of their typical duties. Please see the ‘Constructive Criticism’ section for a discussion on opportunities for improvement on this issue.

*Contribution and Empowerment.* A common theme noted by IS staff at Cedar Creek was an increase of environmental awareness through the turtle program. One of the IS, who is a case manager, had previous knowledge and interest in nature. The program added to the interest in nature and furthered the IS’s knowledge that there is an endangered native turtle in Washington. The IS then passed on knowledge of the endangered turtle to their family. This IS also felt thankful that the program existed and the turtles were trying to be brought back from the brink of extinction.

The other IS who was a case manager felt that the knowledge of the program led to an interest in contributing to the program. They became more interested in getting involved. They also mentioned the awareness the program brought to them about the turtle and the environmental impacts the turtle was experiencing. This IS described the awareness they gained about the turtles:

I didn’t know they were so...I didn’t know they were so loving...I didn’t know they would swim towards you. I didn’t know they were friendly like that. I didn’t know the environment was actually affecting them and their health.

The program not only brought awareness of environmental issues and inspired this IS to think about becoming more involved, but also brought an awareness of the so-called “human emotions” and different personalities the turtles seemed to have. In addition, this IS explained that their interactions with the animals helped the residents and this seemed make the IS feel that the program was making a positive contribution to the residents.

The IS in the custody staff position also awareness gained about the turtles. There was no discussion of sharing that knowledge with others, but they themselves did become

aware of the plight the turtles were facing. Overall, the staff seemed to gain awareness about environmental issues and two staff members felt a pre-existing desire to contribute. Although other IS developed an internal sense of environmental awareness, only one staff is a case manager mentioned spreading this awareness to people around them.

***Empathy.*** Besides the humanity the residents appeared to gain through working with the turtles as described above. The IS at Cedar Creek who were case managers experienced felt a sense of empathy towards the turtles as well. This was a pre-existing feeling for one IS, but a new feeling for the other.

***IS conclusion.*** IS in this research were minimally involved in the turtle program. Despite their minimal involvement, they seemed impacted by the turtle program through learning, gaining awareness of environmental issues facing the turtles and gaining trust in some of the residents in the program. Improved communication about the program and between different staff roles would help the relationships between case managers and custody staff. This being said, the relationships between the residents and the IS appear to be positively impacted by the turtle program. These results are significant for staff who had so little involvement and, therefore, shows possibilities in this program impacting staff beyond those directly involved.

***Prosocial Conclusion.*** Overall the experiences of LS, DS, and IS involved in the turtle program increased prosocial behavior. There were differences between the level of impact the programs had based on the different roles in the program, but every staff member seemed to be impacted in a positive way. Many staff members had pre-existing feelings of empathy towards animals and the residents and the program gave them a tool to act on those feelings. In addition, the program seemed to improve how view residents.

Staff appear to view residents as humans instead of simply a number. These prosocial impacts indicate the possibility of the turtle program and other programs like it to provide a way to improve working relationships between the staff and residents in a positive and productive way. The following table (Table 1) summarizes the major findings on the impacts of prosocial behavior on all staff involved in the turtle program at both facilities.

**Table 1.** Simplified Summary of Notable Reported Prosocial Impacts of the Turtle Program on Staff at both Prisons.

<b>Staff-resident relationships</b>	<b>Staff-staff relationships</b>	<b>Staff-family relationships</b>	<b>Contribution and Empowerment</b>
Collaboration	Improved communication	Ability to relate to children	Empowered to make a difference in resident lives
Staff view residents as human	Negative-unsupportive staff	Desire to teach family	Inspired to bring lessons home
Residents view staff as human			Inspired to face a fear of animals
Break down of barriers			Inspired to learn more
Improved communication			Increased environmental awareness
Increased empathy			Inspired to take environmental action

## **Constructive Criticism**

This section is broken up a bit differently than the section on staff wellbeing and prosocial behavior. In order to make the needs at each facility clear, this section is broken up into different recommendations with a breakdown of specific constructive feedback for each facility and SPP as a whole. In the discussion of each recommendation, the staff who made the suggestion - whether LS, DS or IS - will be made clear.

**Full time sustainability position.** When staff members take on extra responsibilities on top of their already full time position, this can lead to burnout and decreased job satisfaction. A full time sustainability position is currently being trialed at Larch. At this time, Cedar Creek has not implemented a full time staff member. The following two sections break up the feedback at Larch and Cedar Creek on this issue.

***Larch.*** Having a permanent full time sustainability staff member would help reduce the workload of the staff at Larch and improve programming. The LS and the DS both mentioned the importance of this position and the need to make the position permanent. The position is currently being trialed at Larch. One LS explained this was made possible through prioritizing the position and struggling with the budget. Originally the SPP Liaison position was covered by a full time case manager. Case managers already have a full workload and through taking on the extra tasks of SPP programs, like the turtle program, this person was juggling too many things. This impact on workload was described by one of the DS as “difficult to maintain.” As explained by the DS at Larch, the creation of a full time position helps with programming and reduces workload issues. This DS believes this should be a permanent position; particularly in

regard to the expansion of sustainability programming happening at Larch. Larch now has a cat, dog, turtle, honey bee and plantain program. Managing these programs provides more than enough work for one full time staff member.

*Cedar Creek.* Unlike Larch, a full time sustainability position has never existed and is not yet on trial at Cedar Creek. However, the importance of adding this position is equally important as it is to Larch, if not more so. Cedar Creek has a number of sustainability programs including: composting, honey bees, turtles, aquaponics, dogs, gardening and more in the works. The LS at Cedar Creek mentioned the issue of the program involvement being voluntary for the case managers. They explained that if no one volunteers for the position, then the LS have to assign the role to someone. The person assigned initially has a negative view of the program because of extra work, but the LS felt this dissipated as the SPP Liaison begins to learn more and enjoy the program. This LS also mentioned the importance of having an SPP Liaison who is passionate about the program.

Both of the interviewed DS at Cedar Creek did volunteer for the position, so the opinion of someone who was assigned to the program will not be able to be included in this research. As for the DS who volunteered, they did not feel any significant workload increases from the turtle program. However, one DS explained many staff members are concerned that if they volunteer to help with something outside of their regular duties, then “the state” will take advantage of them and add more and more extra work until they are burnt out. When asked if they could relate to this concern, the DS replied:

I see it, but I learn how to place boundaries. There is only so much one person can do in 8 hours. Before working in sustainability, I was [lists off several different programs they were a part of]. I resigned from all except for [names one program] and sustainability.

The solution to this issue, as described by both a DS and IS at Cedar Creek, would be to create a permanent full time sustainability position to help coordinate all the SPP programs.

**Increased staff inclusion.** Both the staff at Larch and Cedar Creek felt there was a need to include more staff in the programs in order to not only raise awareness, but to increase the number of staff experiencing the programs. A common theme staff was the idea that the best way to raise awareness of the programs was for staff involved to share their work with others and to give a tour of the program and the turtles. This idea is supported by the research discussed at the beginning of this thesis, which shows that the closer the encounter with an animal at a zoo, the more interest a visitor has in learning and helping the animal (Clayton, 2008).

**Larch.** The one obstacle that the staff at Larch saw with including more close interactions with the turtles is the need to avoid overexposing the turtles. There was concern expressed about too much interaction stressing the turtles. In actuality, the only issues with the turtles would be them being exposed to too much noise and any physical handling. Therefore, the staff are okay to have a tour of the program, but most of the talking and discussing of the program should be done outside of the building, then the staff should be briefed on the need to be quiet in the turtle building and then allowed to walk through the building to view the turtles. Touring more staff like this and/or including more interested staff in educational opportunities may help increase awareness and staff inclusion at Larch.

**Cedar Creek.** Most of the suggestions for more staff inclusion from Cedar Creek came from DS and IS. One DS mentioned that the program reduced their stress at work

and increased their desire to learn, as well as offered stimulation. Thus, it makes sense, that more staff inclusion may be a good idea. Currently, the only people who get hands-on interaction with the turtle program are case managers. All of the custody or maintenance staff involved have minimal indirect involvement. In addition, there are many other staff members, such as administrative workers and medical staff that could benefit from involvement in the program.

The IS staff explained how one of the only ways to possibly gain more staff support, especially from those that may have a negative opinion of the turtle program, would be to create and advertise opportunities for outside staff involvement. The following is a quote from one of the IS in the role of case manager:

They [admin staff and officers] don't have interest in one on one. They don't know what the offenders go through. We [case managers] know. We deal with everything. If we could get them and the officers involved in the program...it would be great to have the whole facility involved. We are a small facility, but we are divided.

This IS was explaining the need for more staff involvement and the potential for increased staff involvement to help with better understanding and communication amongst all staff.

How would the program successfully include more staff? Some staff who are worried about workload may be interested in a noncommittal opportunity throughout the year, just to engage with the program. However, these opportunities need to be communicated in a meaningful way to the staff. One success described by LS and DS in involving more staff was through the Turtle Emergency Response Team (TERT). Staff members usually not involved in the program were able to be trained as back-up during

any emergency situations. As one LS explained, this effort made the program relevant to custody staff:

Custody folks love emergency response stuff! It's what they do all of the time. It's their focus.

Interpreting the opportunities for program involvement in an interesting way to a specific audience - an example being custody staff and the TERT could help get more staff involvement and buy-in for SPP programs.

However, more opportunities for all staff, including those already interested and indirectly participating, are needed. The IS expressed a desire for increased learning opportunities and better communication about opportunities involving environmental learning and action inside and outside the prison. Suggestions made by staff for a solution to these issues include increased communication through program updates, opportunities in the staff newsletter and more information on outside events shared by the SPP student coordinator.

**Increased communication.** The following section uses the arguments of the interviewed staff members to make suggestions on how the programs at each facility can improve communication between and engagement of all staff members in the facility about the turtle program.

*Larch.* At Larch, the overall the education and communication about the turtle program to the staff members was effective, however, there is always room for improvement. For example, one of the LS at Larch stated that they did not think many other residents besides the ones in the program knew much about the program, if they know it exists at all. The awareness between staff members seems to be well communicated at Larch, but the awareness of the program still may need to be spread



amongst the residents. One of the most feasible ways this can be done is through lectures to the general population on the program and other related topics around the program.

The limitation here would be the time and energy it takes to contact and schedule guest speakers - perhaps the full time sustainability staff member can assist in contacting and scheduling speakers with help from SPP staff on the Evergreen side.

More communication between the DS and the IS needs to happen as well. The DS felt everyone was completely on board with the program with no complaints, however, the one IS who was interviewed at the facility shared concerns about their workload. This IS felt the new full time position was helping decrease their workload, but this is something DS and LS need to be aware of in order to be careful not to overwork IS. On the other hand, these programs require help from other staff in certain situations. If there is a way to communicate the level of commitment needed to IS when they are asked for help, it could be beneficial in reducing stress resulting from a temporarily increased workload.

*Cedar Creek.* As mentioned in several other sections of this thesis, there seemed to be a significant difference between the actual opinions of IS in the role of custody staff and the LS beliefs the custody staff opinions of the program. This disconnect could be due to the small samples size of this research as well as the possibility of the custody staff with negative opinions having no involvement in the turtle program and thus were not interviewed.

Nevertheless, the case managers in particular seemed to feel that not all of the staff supported the turtle program. More communication, with the end goal of reaching all staff, could educate individuals about the programs and opportunities for staff

involvement at the facility. More opportunities for the staff in different roles to work together may be able to begin to create rapport and understanding between staff members.

On another note, one of the IS at Cedar Creek also expressed the interest in better communication from SPP on the impacts of the programs. Specifically, they asked information on what the residents in the SPP programs have done after release. This information is limited, because after leaving the SPP programs, the residents can contact SPP, but SPP cannot reach out to the residents. However, an Evergreen thesis by Emily Passarelli was just completed on the impacts of SPP programs on life after incarceration. Results need to continue to be collected when possible and sharing the results of Passarelli's thesis would help to provide this knowledge.

**Program expansion.** All staff in both facilities expressed the desire for program expansion to more residents and staff. Currently, there are usually only two or three residents in each program working at one time. This an extremely small number of participants compared to the entire resident population of around 480 people. If the program is as important and helpful as the staff say it is in these interviews, then the more residents and staff that can be involved, the better. The following sections describe how the staff members at the two different facilities suggested to expand the programs.

**Larch.** The staff at Larch, particularly the LS and DS, went into detail about the importance of having a program, like the turtle program, that had the potential to increase job satisfaction through stimulating learning opportunities and breaking down barriers through collaboration with residents. One LS mentioned the small size of the turtle program only being able to make a limited impact. One of the DS mentioned the need for

more science programs. A solution to this may be combining individual programs into one large sustainability program. This is naturally starting to happen at Larch. Quickly after the turtle program began, the honey bees and plantain programs were also started. The residents in the turtle program and two residents from another sustainability program called Roots of Success took over these programs. Combining these programs into one large sustainability program, adding more educational and vocational opportunities and more residents would create a higher impact program for all involved.

One challenge to implementing such a program expansion is the education factor. An investment of time and energy would be needed from SPP and the sustainability staff person to coordinate the development of more education materials. In addition, SPP has limited capacity to assist with program expansion at Larch given funding restrictions and travel distance. A possible solution could be seeking additional program funding and creating new partners with outside organizations who are able to help provide more educational opportunities, such as a local college.

*Cedar Creek.* All staff at Cedar Creek expressed the multifaceted benefits of the turtle program and one IS and one LS discussed their desire for program expansion in order to reach a wider population of residents and staff. The LS explained that they wanted the programs to be expanded, but the capacity of the facility was limited. They explained that there is a great deal of programming and jobs in action at the facility, such as educational programming, vocational programming, family reunification, parenting training, Department of Natural Resources (DNR), off site crews, kitchen workers and more. This LS claims that there is not enough programming space or enough residents in the facility to expand the programs. This idea of having an excess of programming and

not enough residents for programming is an interesting concept. This concept does not seem to be widely held or understood among other staff members at the prison.

The IS who expressed an interest in program expansion offered a suggestion which may be an acceptable solution to the concern expressed by the LS above. This IS suggested that all of the programs be combined into one full sustainability program, similar to what is happening at Larch. This would not require additional programming space and would expand the program to more residents. The programs which could be easily combined are: the turtle, honeybee, aquaponics and the newly developing woodpecker program. As the SPP student coordinator, I suggested this idea in a meeting after the interviews at Cedar Creek had been completed. This new program structure is in the process of being implemented.

In addition, this same LS mentioned the need to expand programming to staff members though creating a class on sustainability where the staff could learn with the residents and gain an educational certificate. This staff member had a strong desire to increase educational opportunities, improve behavior of residents and increase learning opportunities for staff. This collaborative sustainability class in addition to combining the current sustainability program could benefit the residents and the staff work environment.

**Facilitate continued change.** Many of the staff expressed the turtle program's importance in increasing their wellbeing in the prison work environment through many different means. The major theme that seems to be where all of the benefits stem from is collaboration between staff and residents. For example one LS stated:

It used to be slave driver and slave. That's how it was when I first started. That is breaking down... It [sustainability programs] brings us closer together.

This LS was referring to the collaborative nature of the programs. The programs have helped begin to change on the traditional punitive relationship between residents and staff into a more team oriented relationship. This was described as a positive step in the right direction. One of the DS at Cedar Creek, mentioned that working side by side with offenders with something not related to prison was beneficial to both offenders and staff.

The staff began to see the offenders as humans instead of just a number. The importance of collaboration, as noted by staff from both prisons, signals a step in the right direction to create a healthier work environment and environment as a whole for staff and residents. A creation of a healthier environment could be achieved through increasing collaboration opportunities in the current programs and/or expanding programs. In addition, I would like to add that one thing which may help in creating a more prison wide collaborative approach. I believe it could be helpful to change the focus during staff trainings from what not to say to residents to how to communicate with residents in a safe and collaborative manner. As one of the DS at Cedar Creek states:

DOC is the Department of Change, why not make it a positive one?

**Increased education.** Both the staff at Larch and Cedar Creek made suggestions for how to improve the educational aspect of the turtle program. However, Larch focused more on one how to improve the education for the residents and Cedar Creek discussed how to improve education for both residents and staff.

**Larch.** As mentioned previously, Larch's turtle program does not receive as many educational opportunities from the SPP student coordinator because of its distance from The Evergreen State College, located in Olympia, WA - where the coordinator comes from. Both of the DS at the facility expressed a need room for improvement in education

programming. One DS mentioned their interest in adding more vocational opportunities which can be linked directly to specific jobs; for example, teaching the residents about solar power, wind mills, waste water, gardening and beekeeping. Some of this education could be brought into the turtle program and some of these could be new “green job” programs to be added to the facility.

The other DS at Cedar Creek showed an interest in bringing more science into the turtle program and the prison as a whole. They noted that the turtle program was the only science based program in the facility and that this program brings opportunities for jobs that appeal to the residents. Therefore, more science education for the residents and more science and vocational programming at Larch may be beneficial to the residents. When programs are beneficial to the residents, the staff may be successful, and thus have increased job satisfaction.

*Cedar Creek.* One DS at Cedar Creek made the suggestion to have more partner involvement. They particularly felt the veterinarian from WDFW’s visit was beneficial and taught empathy to the residents. Outside partners are full of knowledge and bring stimulation and a connection to the outside community. Bringing in more professionals and guests from the outside community could benefit and improve the education in the program

When one LS at Cedar Creek was describing why sustainability was important to them, they explained the importance of tying in environmental sustainability into the personal sustainability of the lives of the residents. This gives an important message to the residents on how to use the idea and practice of sustainability in their relationships and jobs on the outside. In my experience as the SPP student coordinator, this message is

not always communicated well. There is an opportunity here for the Evergreen and the WADOC sides of SPP to work together to develop an effective way to communicate this lesson on how to live sustainably in life and in relation to the environment. This could benefit Larch as well, but was mentioned only by the LS at Cedar Creek.

On another note, one IS at Cedar Creek discussed an interest in not only expanding the education in the turtle program, but expanding the opportunities to the staff. They made the point that many staff members would be interested in learning skills with the residents and also gaining certificates. Including more joint educational opportunities between staff and residents could increase job satisfaction and also provide more beneficial opportunities for the residents and staff to learn together in a collaborative environment.

**Animals and nature for staff.** Interacting with nature and animals has been shown to increase the overall wellbeing. In particular, nature has been shown to have rejuvenating effects. One LS at Larch and one DS at Cedar Creek mentioned repeatedly the stress reducing impacts of interacting with nature and animals during breaks. The turtles in the turtle program are not available for all staff to interact with, as they need to be handled and viewed as little as possible to keep them wild. However, these mentions of the importance of animals and nature as rejuvenating in the workplace were significant. Therefore, I personally would like to recommend encouraging staff and/or having specific times when staff can interact with animals such as in the dog and cat program. In addition, adding more natural spaces for staff to take breaks in, such as healing gardens or nature trails, could improve the work environment of both facilities.

**More community inclusion.** The LS at Larch and Cedar Creek both discussed the importance of spreading the positive news of the turtle program to raise community awareness about programs like these inside of prisons. One DS at Larch mentioned the job satisfaction and pride they gained from sharing the program with their community. In addition, one IS at Cedar Creek explained that the turtle program was being shared with family and friends during events and creating awareness of the program. Another IS at Cedar Creek explained their interest in learning how to share more about their work with family and friends.

Sharing the turtle program with the outside community seems to benefit all levels of staff at both Larch and Cedar Creek. An increase in opportunities for community inclusion in programs like the turtle program could increase community awareness about the programs available inside the prisons. This could lead to the residents being viewed as human beings who have value and that staff are trying to help them successfully re-enter the community. One of the most significant stress factors in the work environment of correctional staff is negative media attention (Finn, 2000). Increasing community awareness may reduce or counteract some of the negative judgments from community members. It may even inspire some community members to get involved and help to create new, innovative programs.

**Do not over do media attention.** In 2015, Anderson defined the term ‘greenwashing’ as:

When an agency or company spends more on marketing and public relations to promote the perception they are environmentally conscious than they spend on implementing environmentally conscious practices and policies.



Spending more does not just mean more money, but more time and energy. Originally, I did not think this topic would be covered in this thesis, as greenwashing was not a subject I expected to come up in interviews with correctional staff members.

However, one staff member, possibly without knowing the term, expressed concern for greenwashing in prisons through use of the sustainability programs. This staff member stated:

They [people from Headquarters] make it a big deal and boast. If it's such a big deal, how come we only have two or three offenders in the program? If it impacts the offenders' lives that much, then how come it is the way it is? If it wasn't that way, it would be more successful. That's what I don't like about the program. That's how we become lost. It loses respect for the program.

This statement expresses frustration with how DOC portrays small sustainability programs like the turtle program. They are explained how the LS and people from headquarters talk about the turtle program and make a big deal about it in the media.

They did not disagree that the program has a positive impact, but they made a valid argument about the very few people involved in the turtle program and other sustainability programs in comparison to the amount of attention the program is given.

This person felt that the prison was spending more effort showing off the program than expanding it, which makes it, in a sense, feels disingenuous to this staff member. In turn, these feelings make them respect towards the program less.

This person is not the only one who feels this way. There has been research done specifically on issue of greenwashing in prison. Jewkes and Moran, in 2015, took a critical view of the prison sustainability movement. They explain that there was a push from the Department of Justice to create more sustainable and environmentally friendly prison operations. Therefore, there is competition within prisons to reduce their carbon

footprint. There are examples where prisons have failing water treatment plants, but this is covered up through their LEED certification. Criticisms of environmental sustainability in prisons make the claim that the sustainability movement may be less about protecting the environment and more about sustaining prisons and supporting mass incarceration.

I am not claiming that this staff member feels or does not feel this way, however, this is an important viewpoint that needs to be shared in order to understand the argument against prisons and greenwashing. It is also important to note that the turtle program is different than other sustainability programs. The goal is not to make the prison operation more environmentally sustainable. On the contrary, the goal is to fill a need from the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a place to care for the turtles, provide education and work experience to the residents responsible for the turtles and to keep the turtles safe and promote healing in order for them to be released back into the wild.

The other side of the argument is that the programs are genuinely doing good things for the residents, the staff, the program partners and the turtles. The LS admitted to showing off the programs because they are proud of them. Here are examples of some of the things the LS stated, which demonstrates their pride in the programs:

1. It is a large source of pride at Cedar Creek and Headquarters-for the agency. It's a source of pride and commitment for the people who are involved.
2. There is a level of pride...they show off the home of SPP. I am a show off of SPP.
3. [In reference to SPP programs] Helps us become a better prison system. I've traveled to different prisons all over the country. Washington has one of the best systems in the entire country-the residents have a lot of respect for us.

The LS expressed pride in many aspects of the turtle program. They expressed particular pride in the novelty of the program, particularly at Cedar Creek. Cedar Creek was where the first SPP program began and thus the LS have a great deal of pride in this.

In addition, the LS did not deny that they wanted the turtle program and programs like it in the media. This is not just because of pride in the program, but because of their desire to improve the public opinion of prisons. One LS expressed how their concern for the prison's unfair image in the public's view:

The public thinks we just house people when there are all these wonderful collaborations that help the residents, but helps the staff at the same time.

A DS at Larch agreed with this LS by explaining how the programs help the image of the prison, but adds that it improves the image of the residents as well.

The more programs that the community sees...not just helps us as a PR thing...Changes the view of the offenders in the community.

This desire to use the SPP programs to improve the image of the prison may bring up concern in some because of the fact that there are serious issues with the prison system, such as mass incarceration and the use of solitary confinement or Intensive Management Units (IMUs) as punishment. As described in a thesis by Webb - a previous co-worker at SPP - in 2016, there is concern that the prison might use the positive media from SPP as a way to cover up the negative realities inside Washington prisons that still exist. This is not greenwashing in the sense of showing off environmentally friendly improvements while not really investing in becoming more environmentally friendly. Instead, this concern is more about showing off the positivity of contributing to saving an endangered species in order to distract from the negative realities of a prison.

On the other side of the argument, there is the fact that multitudes of SPP and SPP-related programs are popping up in prisons throughout Washington and are spreading throughout the US and the world. Based on the interviews in this thesis, these programs are breaking down barriers between staff and teaching the staff how to and the benefits of working collaboratively with the residents. The fact alone that programs like this exist and are rapidly spreading is a step in the right direction. It is possible that these programs are a step in the right direction and may play a role in a slow, systemic change towards prisons being centers of rehabilitation rather than punishment.

Furthermore, there are many people in the general public who view prisons as a place where bad people go to get punished. It is not just prison staff members who have the potential to forget that the residents in the prisons are human beings. Media may be one way to change the public opinion and help people to realize and support the change from a punitive system to a rehabilitative system.

In this research, I am not making the claim as to which argument is right or wrong. The goal of this section is to make readers aware of arguments and to help WADOC leadership become aware of the concern from staff members that the programs seem much smaller than they are being made out to be in the media. The media is an important tool to help spread awareness and change the public view of prisons and the people inside of them, staff and residents. However, if the media attention is overdone, it may have the opposite effect through people started to not take the program seriously. It is important to keep in mind that there is such a thing as too much media attention. In addition, updates and communication to the staff members on plans for program expansion and follow through could help in counterbalancing this issue.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the interviews of the staff members included in this survey, SPP's turtle program has the potential to positively impact the work environment of correctional staff through increased overall wellbeing. The key to this increase in wellbeing is the program's collaborative nature. The staff and residents working and learning together to achieve a common goal improved the atmosphere of the prison work environment, decreased stress, broke down barriers between staff and residents, improved communication between staff and residents, and increased job satisfaction. These positive benefits were reported to lead to improved mood in both residents and staff involved in the program. This led to the staff treating the residents better and the residents improving their behavior which, in turn, led to an increase in prison safety.

Staff involved in the program have the opportunity to contribute to a positive, refreshing work environment through: working closely with animals, playing a role in helping an endangered species recover and assisting the residents in building empathy and other skills to use when re-entering into the community. This led to an increase in prosocial behavior through improved relationships, communication, and increased or supported empathy and helpful behavior.

Some of these benefits were counterbalanced with workload issues and negativity from other staff. The workload issues may be solved by creating full time, permanent sustainability program positions in both facilities. The issues with negativity about the program from select staff members may be reduced through improved and increased communication efforts, an increase in opportunities to be involved.

The results of the interviews from this thesis provide helpful constructive criticism on how to improve the program. The most productive next step in improving

this program - and the prison as a whole - would be through program expansion in order to reach more residents and staff. Another next step could be expanding other collaboratively structured programs throughout the prison system. The greatest benefit of this program seemed to be its ability to catalyze a shift in the staff's mindset from punitive to collaborative and offender to human. The turtle program has a very limited scope, and although the results reported by the staff involved are overall positive, the amount of staff and residents reached by the program is minimal. In order to shift the prison system as a whole from punitive to collaborative, additional, wider reaching programs and training in collaboration would be needed to make a bigger step in the right direction to improve the work environment of correctional staff and thus the living environment of the residents.

This study was a pilot study, which helped us to begin to understand the possibilities of using nature and animal programs in prisons to help improve the work environment in prisons. A control group and follow-up study using the parameters revealed by the interviews would be needed to help to fully understand the possibilities of how nature and animals can be used to improve the prison environment.

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