Letter from the President

Wow! It's so hot that Jehovah’s Witnesses started telemarketing. 😳 We continue to fight for and sincerely hope that the next session will bring the passage of a bill that brings an end to the Heat torture you all are experiencing. There is good news on the legislative front. The Appropriations Committee has taken up the heat as an area of exploration during the interim charge. This is a good sign that our efforts to bring awareness to the legislators are bearing fruit. The charge reads as follows: "Make funding recommendations for the phased installation of climate control equipment in state correctional facilities, prioritizing facilities that serve vulnerable populations.” The Appropriation Committee will be holding a hearing this summer. TPCA and our research partner Dr. Carlee Purdum have continued communicating with officials and will be testifying. Also, the TBCJ board will be voting on the installation of air-conditioning this Friday “Request to Install Air Conditioning System at Buildings B1, B2, B3, Pods 1-9 at Johnston Unit.” TPCA continues to bring awareness to the Extreme heat and Inhumane prison conditions this summer. Our heated Mock Prison Cell will be touring soon in various Texas locations. We have started a cooling towel program for the indigent. So far, we have sent approximately 400 cooling towels to the Chaplin’s office for them to distribute. Let us know if you receive a cooling towel. Our new team of Incarcerated Individuals Mediators is working extra hard to get on top of our backlog of your letters. As you let us know what resources you need, we continue to have volunteers develop those documents. We continue to build relationships with other organizations. In an effort to build more connections, we will be having our first Texas Prison Conditions Unity Conference. Let your family members know this conference will be full of advocacy training opportunities to help them know exactly how to advocate for you. During this time of year, we tend to get more questions about heat scores and heat restriction. Per TDCJ policy, your heat score and restrictions are based on your physical exam. What you need to know, the short version… PLEASE do not let go of either of those designations. Similar to the grievances, if it isn’t there, there is no problem. If your heat restrictions have somehow disappeared from your records, you must fight to get them reinstated through medical. Let us know if you need help with that. Thanks to you all we are aware that some people have unfortunately been moved to “cool beds”. For some, those cool beds are in Seg areas which has caused a loss of activities. There are easy answers to that dilemma. We are continuing to assess that situation.

Every day we grow. Every day we move forward. Every day we continue to fight.

Amite Dominick, Ph.D.
TPCA President and Founder

Commissary Update

TPCA sent a price analysis of the cost of goods in Commissary to TDCJ, which detailed not only the monetary increase of each good but also the percentage increase of each good from 2020 to 2022. The request for a spending increase and an Ecomm increase was forwarded to executive leadership for review. The increase of the bi-weekly spend amounts for all custody levels will begin on July 18, 2022, and the quarterly spend amounts for eCommDirect online purchases will begin on July 1, 2022.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>July 18, 2022</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>$95.00 to $105.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G4</td>
<td>$35.00 to $40.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G5</td>
<td>$25.00 to $30.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Visitation Photos

Visitation pictures have returned. They will be taken on the first Saturday and Sunday of each month. When your visitor arrives, they must fill out a form. Digital pictures, one together and one of you alone, will be taken and emailed to your visitor by Wednesday of the following week.

Do you need shoes?

On June 1st, wardens were informed that family members can now purchase a pair of shoes on your behalf from an outside vendor. This is not a policy and is at the discretion of the warden. The incarcerated individual must request permission to pursue an outside purchase from the unit property officer by submitting an I60. A new pair may be purchased once a year. A one-for-one exchange is required. The shoe must be all white with no design logos or extreme designs. High-tops and mid-tops are not allowed. The total value of the shoe may not exceed $100, even if on sale at the time. Receipts are not required. However, if a Warden believes the shoes are over the $100 limit, proof of purchase may be required. Shoes may be of any brand. This purchase can only be made by family members. Zappos is a TDCJ-approved vendor, and using them may limit problems and confusion. I will continue to work on these issues and bring updates.

TPCA President and Founder

Amite Dominick, Ph.D.

Kathy’s Corner

Do you need shoes?

On June 1st, wardens were informed that family members can now purchase a pair of shoes on your behalf from an outside vendor. This is not a policy and is at the discretion of the warden. The incarcerated individual must request permission to pursue an outside purchase from the unit property officer by submitting an I60. A new pair may be purchased once a year. A one-for-one exchange is required. The shoe must be all white with no design logos or extreme designs. High-tops and mid-tops are not allowed. The total value of the shoe may not exceed $100, even if on sale at the time. Receipts are not required. However, if a Warden believes the shoes are over the $100 limit, proof of purchase may be required. Shoes may be of any brand. This purchase can only be made by family members. Zappos is a TDCJ-approved vendor, and using them may limit problems and confusion. I will continue to work on these issues and bring updates.

Amite Dominick, Ph.D.
My name is Melissa Riana. I have been advocating within the TDCJ system for about 13 years, as well as the NYS prison system. I am a firm believer in the need for prison reform not only because of injustices in the prison system but also due to other underlying factors. Advocating for TPCA has opened many doors, and I have met many great people along the way. I believe everyone deserves a fair chance at turning their life around, a fair trial, and everyone should be treated equally. I also think the system needs to do better at preparing our loved ones so they can have a chance to excel upon release. Too often, they are put right back into the same places and positions they came from and are left to struggle. Do not judge someone by their past. Everyone should have a fair chance at proving themselves as capable. Give that chance, and I bet you will be surprised. I am looking forward to continuing to advocate and be of service to the affected family members and those of you behind the walls.

Melissa Riana

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Paths to Freedom is an advocacy organization devoted to assisting you with re-entry by offering you faith-based support as you return home. Its mission is to raise community awareness about the challenges for persons affected by the prison cycle, to share unconditional love and words of inspiration, and to help ex-prisoners successfully reintegrate into society. Paths to Freedom also advocates on behalf of incarcerated veterans through letters received from veterans. They offer the following reintegration programs.

The Lazarus Project support group offers you life coaching, job networking, clothing, and help applying for a free phone.

Welcome home celebrations every three months

Re-entry Social hour every 2nd Sat.

You can reach The Encourager, Danny Sneed, and his team at St. John's Downtown
2019 Crawford St.
Houston, TX 77002

for more info or assistance and programs after your release you can google them at www.stjohnsdown.org

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Incarcerated Individuals Mediators are here for you, responding to your letters and getting answers to your questions. They work in partnership with the Family Mediators, and together these two teams are dedicated to advocating, and sharing resources that will help resolve your issues and concerns. Thank you for your letters and your participation in TPCA’s Surveys. Your voice is important, and we will continue to advocate for you to make sure that your stories are told.

Meet the team!

Region 1 Nicole
Region 2 Cheryl Haver
Region 3 Pending
Region 4 Carla Hampton
Region 5 Marie Busam
Region 6 Heather Rainwater

Hello to everyone. I hope everyone finds themselves well. Our team is working diligently through this predicted HOT summer. We want to ensure that all are provided with the essentials for the duration of this heat, like respite and keeping hydrated as much as possible. If there are any concerns you are going through, please let your loved one know, and they can contact us, and we will guide your loved one on the outside on how to advocate for you. If you do NOT have a loved one on the outside to advocate for you, please write one of our awesome incarcerated individual mediators for your region at TPCA's P.O. Box. We look forward to serving all of you in whatever issue you may have.

I also wanted to introduce our new Region II family mediator Talena Butters. Talena has been very active in advocating for her loved one, who is currently incarcerated, and holds a strong passion for advocating for the incarcerated.

Welcome, Talena! We have no doubt you will be a great advocate.

Respectfully,
Tatiana Santollo, MA, MSL
Director of Family Mediators

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TPCA Mission Statement
Texas Prisons Community Advocates (TPCA) educates and supports family members, incarcerated individuals, and others by connecting them to organizational resources, encouraging awareness, and advocating for the advancement of humane conditions within the Texas Prisons.

TPCA Board
Amite Dominick, PhD
President and Founder
Tanika Solomon, Esq.
Secretary
Jessica Dickerson
Treasurer

Donations can be made on our website or Checks can be made out to Texas Prisons Community Advocates and mailed to the following address:

TPCA Contact Info:
P.O. Box1974
Fulton, TX 78358
TPCAAdvocates@gmail.com
www.TPCAdvocates.org

TPCA is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the policies of TPCA.

TPCA does NOT have a legal department yet, so we can’t assist with any legal recommendations or legal advice.
TDCJ Policy on Respite Use

AD-10.64 includes specific heat-mitigation measures that are intended to protect all offenders regardless of their individual risk level. These measures include: Making respite areas available 24 hours per day, seven days per week, for all offenders who are not assigned to a cool bed. Offenders may request access to a respite area 24 hours per day, seven days per week, even if they are not feeling ill at the time of the request, and are permitted to stay in the respite area as long as necessary. Offenders requesting access to a respite area are not required to be seen by medical staff unless they are exhibiting signs or symptoms of a heat-related illness.

Hot Weather Safety

Hot Weather Safety Know the Signs

HEAT EXHAUSTION:
• Heavy sweating
• Weakness
• Cool, clammy skin
• Fast, weak pulse
• Nausea, vomiting
• Fainting

If someone experiences heat exhaustion, the following action should be taken promptly to allow the person to recover and reduce body temperature.
• Sip water
• Sit or lie down in a cool location
• Loosening clothing and applying wet cloths to exposed skin.
• Any person experiencing these symptoms should not be left alone as his/her condition may worsen
• Call for emergency medical care if the person begins to vomit, has a loss of consciousness, incoherent speech, convulsions, red and hot facial features, or if his/her original condition does not improve with the first aid steps listed above.

HEATSTROKE:
• High body temperature (>103° F)
• Hot, red skin
• Rapid, strong pulse
• Possible unconsciousness

If someone experiences heatstroke, immediate action should be taken to summon emergency medical care and move the person to a cool location. Do NOT give fluids to a person experiencing heatstroke.

If you fall into any of the following criteria you may want to attempt to get a medical hardship transfer or cool bed or air-conditioned unit. 

Heart Disease, Mental Health Disorders such as Schizophrenia, Psychosis; or Bipolar disorder, Dementia/Alzheimer's Disease, Developmental Disabilities, 65 Years of Age or Older with certain medical conditions.

Help us Help you
Get to know the Heat Directive.
File your I-60's and Grievances.
Communicate with your Loved Ones about what you filed and send copies when you can.

Fill out TPCA's Heat Survey and return.

A Note From the Editor
Thank you so much for contributing to our efforts by returning the heat survey. I want this newsletter to be beneficial to you, so if you have any questions or suggestions for content, please submit them. The next issue will be out around the holidays and will contain information about our plans for the next legislative session. Coretta Scott King said, “The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.” My passion is to make sure that your community is not forgotten. Show compassion to those around you, and continue to help us spur empathy and awareness in our leaders and communities to make much-needed changes a reality. We continue the fight on your behalf, and with each session, we get closer to the goal. Your stories inspire us to keep pushing. Thank you for sharing them, Jessica Dickerson
Tables
TDCJ is continuing to roll out the tablets, and as the summer progresses, they will be available at more units. There are many questions surrounding tablets. One is how well they handle the heat. We would like to know if you experience any of the potential issues that can occur when electronic devices are exposed to extreme temperatures, like battery life issues, tablets turning off when overheated, screens cracking or melting, and condensation issues due to humidity. Please write us or include problems with your heat surveys.

Reflections from the Inside - Op-Ed
If you have received parole, congratulations. You have won the coveted lottery. TDCJ has a few programs, policies, and tools to assist you out the door. You will meet with re-entry. Re-entry is charged with gathering your personal information so that upon release, you can be provided with a Texas ID, a social security card, a bus voucher, 30 days worth of medications, and a stipend to get you home. Arrangements may also be made for someone to pick you up directly from your facility. Your ride will be given the time and date to pick you up. Within 90 days of release, you will be scheduled to meet with peer education for a three-hour course called Somebody Cares. As part of this course, a guide of resources will be available to you. These resources include phone numbers and addresses of state agencies such as the Texas Workforce Commission, the welfare department, and the county health department. These resources will assist you with your chronic medications. Also, with this resource guide, you will find contact information for private organizations that are there to help you get back on your feet. This Somebody Cares course is designed to help reorient your thoughts on what to expect when you get home, what to expect from parole, and what to expect from employers. You may also contact your cognitive intervention transition program and sign up for a course called Back to Basics. In this course, you will receive a booklet entitled Basic Needs. This pamphlet includes discussions of the challenges facing the newly released, including family strains, finding employment, and mental health issues. There is also a comprehensive guide describing what needs to be done in the first 72 hours of release and what documents you will need to navigate your newly found freedom. Mock interviews are also set up to prepare you for your first job. This course was designed with your best interest in mind.

For those of us that have not received parole, congratulations! We still have the luxury of time to prepare for our parole. The most fundamental thing we can do to thrive is to continue having good healthy communication with family and friends. They will be the first line of success in assisting you with a place to stay, contacts for employment, and can help reorient you with the things that have changed while you were away. There are many programs that you can take now that will get you ready for home long before the last 90 days. Each day should be spent with a transition to home in mind. If you take a class, let it not be for the sake of a check mark for your ITP or a certificate for parole in mind. You can’t buy your way to freedom. Take these classes with the intention of self-improvement and with your own personal success in mind. Take a trade that you know will lead you to find a job. Take college classes with employment as your goal. Live each day as if you have already received your Fi1, and you will already have the mindset needed to go home, succeed, and become independent. For those who have been granted parole, it will benefit you to understand that you have already surpassed many people not incarcerated. You have developed infinite patience. You are a gifted ambassador at negotiating peace in conflict resolution. You have earned the value and preciousness of freedom, and you have thrived in heat. Rejoice in the fact that you have had little exposure to social media. Your attention span, memory, and direct communication skills are superior to many of the people you will be competing with for jobs. You have thrived in adversity. Be proud of yourself and grateful for the graces extended to you. Enjoy your freedom. Follow all stipulations that are required of you and blaze an honorable trail for the rest of us. In short, have a good, honest, and fruitful life.

Best Wishes,
Jim Guevara

A New Way for You to Help.
TPCA has opened a store, and there have been requests from our membership for additional selections. One member suggested art. So, we have put our brains together and thought we would come to you with this idea. TPCA and Bumbershoot Books Solutions would like to publish a coffee table book of your art. Selected works would be compiled and bound into book form. We would like to include a short blurb about your work or a piece of poetry. Tell us what inspired you or what you would like the viewers to see. Please include what medium you used, as well. This book would be available on TPCA’s website and would help us raise funds to continue our work on your behalf. You might even see your work in this newsletter. If you would like to contribute, please mail your submission with your blurb and the following release statement to P.O. Box 1974 Fulton, TX 78358. "I, (Insert your name), release this original art to Texas Prisons Community Advocates and transfer ownership, as a donation, to TPCA. Please sign your release and date it. We must have a release for publication. Thank you for your contributions!

TPCA and Bumbershoot Books Solutions would like to publish a coffee table book of your art. Selected works would be compiled and bound into book form. We would like to include a short blurb about your work or a piece of poetry. Tell us what inspired you or what you would like the viewers to see. Please include what medium you used, as well. This book would be available on TPCA’s website and would help us raise funds to continue our work on your behalf. You might even see your work in this newsletter. If you would like to contribute, please mail your submission with your blurb and the following release statement to P.O. Box 1974 Fulton, TX 78358. "I, (Insert your name), release this original art to Texas Prisons Community Advocates and transfer ownership, as a donation, to TPCA. Please sign your release and date it. We must have a release for publication. Thank you for your contributions!
TDCJ has begun enforcing their heat protocols for 2022. We are aware that these policies are not always followed at the unit level. So to hold TDCJ accountable we need your help!

Please check all the following that apply.*

☐ No Cups
☐ No Ice
☐ Broken Ice Machines
☐ No water
☐ No Heat policy posted
☐ Cold Shower not working
☐ Low/no water pressure in shower
☐ Denied access to the respite area
☐ No access to cool down showers
☐ No Bottled water available through Commissary
☐ No electrolyte sports drinks available through Commissary
☐ No cooling towels on Commissary
☐ No cooling shirts on Commissary
☐ No water breaks while working (specifically outside jobs)
☐ Health crisis disregarded
☐ No wellness checks being conducted
☐ Denied a personal fan (Inmates are allowed 2 personal fans with the exception of inmates at transfer facilities.)
☐ No access to Unit fans
☐ Broken Unit fans
☐ Not being allowed to wear shorts and t-shirts in dayrooms and recreational areas
☐ Transported/left in hot bus

Please describe how often you receive water, the condition of the water (ex. Hot, with or without ice, infested with vermin etc.).

________________________________________________________________________

If yes, how often are you allowed to take a cold shower? ___________________________

If no, please describe the nature, frequency, time frame, duration, reasons given, other circumstances __________________________

If you have ever been denied access to the respite area, why were you denied, date, and by whom?
________________________________________________________________________

If you were granted access to the respite area, please describe its conditions and how long you were allowed in the area.
(frequency, nature, applicable time frame, reasons given, and other circumstances, including most recent example)
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Where are the non working fans? ________________________________________________

HEAT RELATED MEDICAL CONCERNS

Are you heat restricted? ☐ Yes ☐ No Please describe your heat restriction __________________________

Have you been asked to waive their Heat restrictions? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, who asked you to waive their heat restriction? __________________________

Have you chosen to waive their heat restriction themselves? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Are you prescribed a heat sensitive medication? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Have you been asked to stop your medication? ☐ Yes ☐ No Did you decide to stop taking your medication? ☐ Yes ☐ No If yes then why? __________________________

Texas Prisons Community Advocates P.O. Box 1974 Fulton, TX 78358  TPCAdvocates@gmail.com www.TPCAdvocates.org
Do you have underlying health conditions such as: diabetes, high blood pressure, cancer?

Do you have a heat related illness? (Describe)

Have you had a heat related illness or symptoms following heat related symptoms such as: dizziness; fainting; heat rash; headache, dizziness, and confusion; loss of appetite and feeling sick; excessive sweating; pale, clammy skin; cramps in the arms, legs, and stomach; fast breathing or pulse. Please describe.

Do you know of any heat related deaths? (name)

We have received a lot of complaints about "heat restricted" incarcerated being transferred to air-conditioned units, or "cool beds" within Segregation areas of a unit and denied access to numerous privileges. Some are being treated as if they are in solitary or Ad Seg when their classification level is not consistent with segregation restrictions. Therefore, the following questions are designed to investigate this issue.

What is your classification level? □ G1 □ G2 □ G3 □ G4 □ G5

Has you been moved to Seg area for "cool bed"? □ Yes □ No

Is there always air conditioning in Ad. Seg? □ Yes □ No

Have after being moved to a Seg area have you being denied any of the following?

☐ Dayroom access  ☐ Physical access to Law Library  ☐ Marriage Seminars
☐ Outside recreation  ☐ Educational Classes  ☐ Rehabilitation Programs
☐ Inside recreation  ☐ Phone privileges  ☐ Visitation
☐ Commissary  ☐ Access to showers  ☐ Denied water  

JOB

What is your job? ___________________ Time frame held? ______________ How many hours a day do you work? ________________

How many days a week do you work? ______________ Are you allowed water breaks for your job? □ Yes □ No

Please describe any circumstances during work related to the heat conditions? (including sunlight exposure, whether you are given the option not to work, whether requested protections are given, whether adequate water is provided, whether different work is offered, whether other benefits are provided)

Are you allowed water breaks for field jobs? □ Yes □ No  Are you heat sensitive □ Yes □ No

☐ Step I Grievance filed (1)  ☐ Step II Grievance filed (2)

Results from Step I & Step II Grievance

Helpful Information: If you become aware of a situation where the TDCJ Heat Directive is not being followed, it should be reported immediately and if not remedied, a Step 1 Grievance should be filed. If a heat situation continues after a Step 1 Grievance has been filed, a Step 2 Grievance should be filed.

If you would like to share any additional information, or have any relevant documentation and/or, have anything you feel may be helpful you write to us at:
Texas Prisons Community Advocates
P. O. Box 1974
Fulton, TX 78382

Thank you! Hopefully your feedback will help to improve the heat conditions within TDCJ.