

Happy New Year!

Hi All-

Oh, what a year! I don't see much point in dwelling on everything that went down in 2020 because, well, we all were there. Instead, we'll take an abbreviated look back with more focus on what it means for us moving forward.

I was struck by a particular quote I saw some months back that read, "People of accomplishment rarely sat back and let things happen to them. They went out and happened to things." COVID-19 undoubtedly happened to us, but I'm incredibly proud of how we happened to 2020! Especially early on in the pandemic, it was difficult to not push the easy button and just shut everything down and hope it would all blow over. We did the hard things, and we figured out ways to keep our system moving. We made plenty of mistakes along the way, but what we got a lot right, learned from what we didn't, and ultimately set ourselves up to emerge from the pandemic in a stronger position than when we started.

Most important of all, it's the mindset and approach to the work that we carry forward into 2021 that I'm excited about. It's not uncommon for us in corrections to feel like things happen to us. It causes us to be reactionary, and it can shift our focus from doing good to trying to keep bad things from happening. How many times have you heard that we don't decide who comes to us or when they leave? A bunch, right? We might not be the ultimate decision-makers deciding who comes to us or when they leave, but we damn sure have the ability to influence what the experience of being under IDOC jurisdiction looks like, how we set people up for success, and the confidence levels of the people making those decisions. Recognizing that, and being willing to focus our efforts strategically, is the difference between things happening to us and us happening to things.

Making good things happen starts with you! There are several changes afoot that we hope directly impact your sense of purpose and frankly, make your work life a little easier. We are shifting several functions in central office to better support you, to include an increased focus on wellness and stress reduction from HR, regular communication from Executive Leadership, and continuing opportunities for you to get involved and suggest improvements via virtual townhalls and the BrightIdeas@idoc.idaho.gov email.

So much of the work that's taken place during this pandemic is going to pay huge dividends in the near future. The investment in broadband expansion, technology and standing up a resident network is going to significantly increase opportunities and capacity for education, programming, learning, and keeping people connected to positive support systems. Simultaneously, it leverages staffing resources so we can be more efficient in our service delivery. The Connection and Intervention Stations, coupled with a more mobile workforce with more tools like electronic monitoring at their disposal, have a unique opportunity to increase success for the supervised population while reducing crime in our communities. A focus on addressing root-cause issues, like trauma, offers a path to breaking cycles that have often been generations in the making. And a move to a more holistic approach that sees programming and interventions to include education, vocation, food service and ICI as a way of treating the whole person, rather than responding to a singular behavior, promises to better prepare people to leave our system. None of that happens without you.

Sure, there were plenty of parts of 2020 that sucked, and we're not out of the woods yet. Still, I couldn't be prouder of the way you happened to 2020. I'm excited about what we'll accomplish in the year ahead.

I hope the new year brings you good health, happiness and fulfillment. Happy New Year!

Josh