

Two IDOC facilities offer media programs for residents

During the summer of 2020, Robert Janss School at Idaho State Correctional Institution (ISCI) ceased delivery of in-person education classes due to Covid-19. Out of necessity and with ingenuity, the education department at (ISCI) was created, what has become, a thriving media program, for, and with, residents.

The media program started with a computer and an internal television channel so educational content could be broadcast to residents. Video editing software and a camera were added, along with an old gaming computer donated by an education staff member. Then came a handful of new and used computers. This equipment was used to regularly create education content for residents within the Robert Janss School (RJS) Media Center program.

A resident named Mario with decades of experience in radio, television, and entertainment shared his professional expertise with education staff and as a result the program's reach and influence grew during the Covid-19 pandemic. Mario led and trained other residents to continue the work. Andrew Strelbel, Instructor at (ISCI) and Lt. Steve Stelzer at South Idaho Correctional Institution (SICI) began a collaborative effort to join together on a 'lightbulb' project idea.

This collaboration between (ISCI) and (SICI) created the development of the program at the Farm. Mario moved to the Farm to help develop a curriculum based employment opportunity that now ventures into the public and serves a variety of internal and external stakeholders.

Without the work that was done at the Yard, and it's proven success, the opportunity to expand to (SICI) would have been missed in creating a [new partnership](#) with vocational programs between two facilities and [partners within our community](#).

The innovation improved communication between facility staff and the residents when addressing procedural changes, educational content, healthcare concerns, living conditions and much more. The resources were instrumental in providing virtualized graduation or appreciation ceremonies via Facebook and YouTube. Residents contributed to filming, editing and producing training videos for new sanitization equipment that was distributed to other IDOC facilities around the state during the pandemic.

On July 16, 2022, Robert Janss School was recognized for their efforts by the state Career and Technical Education Committee. A huge shout out to Mario Hernandez, Andrew Strelbel, Shelley Beard, and Lt. Steve Stelzer for their team work and diligent efforts.

Here are a 'few examples' of how the Media Center has positively impacted IDOC:

ISCI's RJS media programs accomplishments so far, while providing [weekly educational content...](#)

- Filmed outdoor recreation events such as tournaments and music concerts
- Since August 2020, the media group has filmed and edited monthly [Town Halls](#) in the Admin. Building.
- Created training video for Emist static sterilization units. The videos and sterilization units have assisted with the [combat of Covid-19](#) during the pandemic.
- [Facilitated a virtual GED graduation via Zoom and Facebook.](#)
- [Provided a Covid-19 update video for families of incarcerated men and women](#)
- Covid-19 safety and gowning videos for staff
- Idaho National Guard [Appreciation banquet to honor all ISCI American Legion](#) members and their contributions to combat Covid-19.
- Collaborated with the IDOC's Training department and Lt. Stelzer on the initial "Emerging Leaders" content and videos.
- Virtual tours for Court judges to see Unit 15 and the RDU process