

# Sustainability in Prisons Project Newsletter



Winter 2017  
Issue 9



Working with  
Students

Please click on a title to read the full article. Online version of the newsletter available at <http://sustainabilityinprisons.org/resources/spp-publications/>. Banner photos by Ricky Osborne and Shauna Bittle.

## The Many Benefits of Working with Students

By Joslyn Rose Trivett, SPP Education and Outreach Manager



*Clockwise from the top left, Sadie Gilliom (ball cap), Ricky Johnson, Daniel Cherniske, Conrad Ely, and Lindsey Hamilton working in prisons. Photo of Conrad by Ricky Osborne.*

Our winter newsletter is about the many, wonderful students who work for the Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP). SPP could not be what it is without them.

SPP's founding director at [The Evergreen State College](#) hired graduate students to support prison programs beginning in 2008; that was when SPP was gaining traction as a more formal effort, and was growing in scale and scope (more about history [here](#)). At first, the workload demanded just one or two students at a time, and those individuals worked broadly—for multiple programs—to build partnerships and disseminate results. Over time, the number and complexity of programs being coordinated by SPP-Evergreen increased resulting in the current model: a student coordinating each ecological conservation and environmental education program.



*SPP-Evergreen team, 2011. Unknown photographer.*

We rely on student-staff Program Coordinators in myriad ways. They are the ones most often going into the prisons. They serve as the face of a program, and the leads for communicating details—large and small—that

are part of the program's successes. They continually add to the educational breadth of each program in many forms: formal presentations, seminars on scientific papers, hosting a partner-scientist's visit, recommending readings, and countless conversations about programs' plans, impacts, and larger context. Students also study SPP programs; they help track and evaluate the quality of each program, and ten have conducted formal research on SPP topics (a few



*SPP-Evergreen graduation party, 2013. Photo by Tony Bush.*

examples [here](#)). Each student brings a unique perspective to SPP, and our programs are enriched by their energies and cutting-edge ideas.



Graduation brings an end to student-staff employment. Each coordinator trains their successor, which is as much about introducing them to the culture and ways of thinking as it is about program policy and protocols. Each turnover is bittersweet. We have to say good-bye to someone we have relied on and invested in, and it is painful to see them go. At the same time, we get to welcome someone new, and their fresh perspectives help SPP to continually improve; we can't get stale! Also, there is the satisfaction of seeing SPP alumni go on to new and valuable endeavors, and we take pride in supporting their ongoing careers and aspirations.



*SPP-Evergreen graduation party, 2014. Photo by Daphne Harwood.*



*DOC staff, Evergreen staff, and student-staff pose following a successful frog release, October, 2015. Photo by Woodland Park Zoo staff.*

Choosing just a few students to highlight in this newsletter means *not* highlighting most, and that is hard to do. Thirty-eight Evergreen students have worked for SPP so far. All have brought something important and enduring to our programs. You may learn more about most of them on our [staff page](#). We hope that the following articles will serve to illustrate the range and diversity of their character, expertise, and strengths. These are wonderful humans, and it is such a pleasure to celebrate them!

# Excellent Student and Teacher

By Susan Christopher, Butterfly Technician, Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women

The butterfly technicians from Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW) would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our departing program coordinator, **Mr. Seth Dorman**.

Mr. Dorman was with the program for about a year and a half. During that time, his dedication and work ethic inspired us to be the best workers, students, and scientists we could be.

He was both an excellent student and teacher. He learned very quickly about DOC policies and **SPP's butterfly program**.



*On his last day in the program, Seth holds a thank you card from the butterfly technicians. The article's author is second from the left. Photo by Keegan Curry.*



*Seth and butterfly technicians carefully work through "spring wake-up," the time when the caterpillars come out of winter dormancy. Photo by a technician.*

He treated us with respect, encouraged us to think outside the box and to step outside our comfort zone and share those ideas. He displayed tremendous patience and a great sense of humor, even while trying to explain the concept of a "null hypothesis" to us.

Mr. Dorman's coordination efforts produced, for the first time ever, the opportunity for two technicians to join a butterfly release. Also due to his efforts, all four technicians attended the

Taylor's checkerspot butterfly working group meeting, where we had input on region-wide efforts to protect and recover the endangered species.

We consider ourselves fortunate to have had the opportunity to work with Mr. Dorman: *Thank you, Seth; we wish you the utmost success in all your future endeavors.*



# Enthusiasm, grace, and patience

By Carl Elliott, Kelli Bush, and Joslyn Rose Trivett, SPP-Evergreen Managers



*Fawn brought Princess Remington, a turkey vulture, to the lecture series at Stafford Creek Corrections Center, and held the class' full attention for a solid hour (more about her presentation [here](#)). Photo by Joslyn Rose Trivett.*

Fawn Harris fills her days to overflowing, and navigates her many activities with grace and patience. She is a **Master of Environmental Studies** student, employee and volunteer with **West Sound Wildlife**, regularly active in her cultural community and environmental movement, and she coordinates SPP's **prairie conservation nursery** program at Washington Corrections Center—a relatively new program with unusual and complex demands.

Fawn is the first member of her family to attend college. She is passionate about education, the environment, and building community. She successfully juggles the many elements of her life.

At Washington Corrections Center, she works and studies with men who are cognitively disabled, and finds ways to make science and environmental education accessible and relevant to them. Partnering with this population is a new challenge for SPP, and Fawn has been central to the program's success thus far. She has shown patience and perseverance with everyone involved.

Above all, Fawn is a wonderful communicator. She knows how to captivate a large audience, describing the habits of birds-of-prey in a way that makes a lasting impression. She will take the time with a student to explain and discuss complex topics until the student feels satisfied. She also stands up for herself, and says what she needs, so that she is both safe and effective in her work. We are so impressed by Fawn and so happy to be working with her!



*Fawn works on plant pressings with a student at Washington Corrections Center. Photo by Carl Elliott.*

# Lecture Series Coordinators 1, 2, 3

By Paula Andrew, Roots of Success Liaison, Training Coordinator, and "Chicken Lady" at Washington Corrections Center for Women



"There is nothing more beautiful than someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others." ~ Mandy Hale

When I first came to work at the Washington Corrections Center for Women nearly 5 years ago, I came from a background of work in men's prisons, large and small. Looking back, nothing could have prepared me for the impact I would feel working with female offenders.

My heart went out to the women I encountered on a daily basis. The more I got out of my office and observed, the hungrier I became to try and bring some kind of normalcy to the women that were longing to make the best of their shattered world.



I was delighted when I found out I would be working with an organization called the Sustainability in Prisons Project – bonus for me! A group of caring **Evergreen** students and staff who want what I want for these women: a little dose of culture from the outside they can embrace and expand their world with...their little tiny corner of their now restricted world needs expanding.



From top to bottom: Brittany Gallagher, Tiffany Webb, and Liliana Caughman at work in SPP's lecture series. Photo of Brittany and Anna Thurston by Shauna Bittle.

Enter **Brittany Gallagher**, Lecture Coordinator for the Sustainability in Prisons Project. Her job was to plan, organize, and recruit speakers for our monthly *Sustainability* lecture series. My job was to work with her to put things together on the prison end to make it happen. What a treat it was to work with her! She immediately had the respect of the women in the audience for the lectures. You could tell the women were excited when she talked about things they could do in their own community upon release, and it gave them hope for a

sustainable future. Brittany's quiet smile spread warmth throughout the classroom that was contagious! When Brittany graduated from Evergreen College, like all good graduate students do, I felt like I had lost a good buddy. She was off to the world of exploring her universe, and I was sad to see her go, but excited for her at the same time.

. . . And then along came **Tiffany Webb**, pretty much the exact opposite of Brittany, with her wide grin, her dancing eyes, and her thirst for sharing her passion for all things sustainable with the world. Tiffany was quick to share her enthusiasm with the students and show them glimpses of life beyond the metal bars. Her



stories were laced with leadership, compassion, and strength. Tiffany had a way of involving the students to the point there were actual tears among the lecture-goers when she left. It was a sad day when we had to say goodbye to Tiffany, but waiting in the wings was . . .

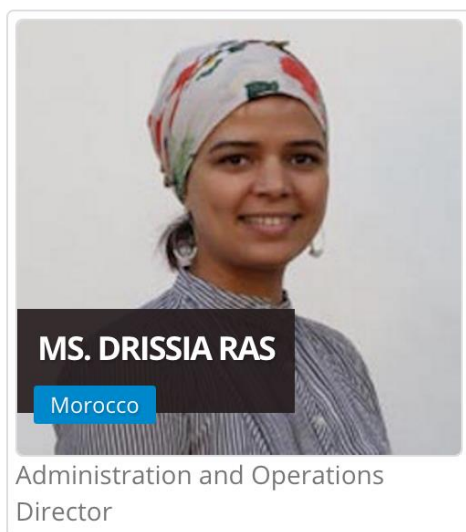
. . . **Liliana Caughman**! Dear Liliana quickly became a reliable source of information to the women, one with good listening skills and a patient manner. She continues the Brittany/Tiffany legacy with passion and conviction, all the while spreading the word that these gals can make a difference in the world.

Brittany, Tiffany, Liliana are definitely “someone who goes out of their way to make life beautiful for others”!

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## From SPP to Water for the World

By Joey Burgess, Prairie Conservation Nursery Coordinator, Stafford Creek Corrections Center



Staff photo from  
<https://friendlywater.net/ABOUT>.

representative from a non-profit organization, **Friendly Water for the World**, was also involved. They invited her to embark on a research project to evaluate the performance of a household water filter, **BioSand**, for removing arsenic, and this became the subject of her Master's thesis. She found that the water filter was extremely effective at removing arsenic, a valuable finding for applications of the technology in developing communities. Following graduation, Drissia continued to work with Friendly Water for the World, and became their Administration & Operations Director.

**Drissia Ras** served as **Conservation Nursery Coordinator** at Stafford Creek Corrections Center from 2012-14 while completing her **Master of Environmental Studies** degree at Evergreen—the same position I am in now. For Drissia, performing weekly educational workshops and lectures was the most important aspect of her work. She believed that education was crucial to the transformation of this vulnerable population into valuable members of society with a future. She also appreciated the hours spent getting her hands therapeutically dirty while cultivating prairie plants. It was a much-needed break from academic endeavors.

During coursework for Drissia's Master's degree, she found herself in Yakima County working with farmers, county officials, and other stakeholders on preserving water quality in local watersheds. A



*Bri Morningred, Jaal Mann, and Drissia Ras, all three prairie conservation nursery coordinators, smile during an SPP celebration in 2013. Photo by SPP staff.*

Drissia says her experiences from SPP serve her well in her current work. She appreciated the openness and flexibility that her supervisors provided; it meant she could get the experience she needed. SPP's management style was perfect for her. She was guided effectively, and empowered to develop project-management and personal skills. Working in a prison with **Department of Corrections** staff, she expanded her communication skills in ways that now help her establish and maintain relationships with global partners.

For the future, Drissia plans to continue working with non-profit organizations. Although she recognizes that every organization is distinct and dynamic, she finds SPP especially unique because of the network of partnerships it has formed. She hopes to implement a similar networking strategy into her future work with marginalized populations.

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## Across cultures and values

By Brittany Gallagher, External Affairs Manager, The Nature Conservancy



*SPP Graduate Research Assistant Brittany Gallagher helps an Oregon spotted frog take its first leap into the wild. Photo by Matthew Williams of the New York Times.*

When I was looking into graduate schools, I searched for an environmental studies program in which social justice was an integral—and integrated—part. As a **Returned Peace Corps Volunteer**, I was sensitive to inequitable global environmental policy and its detrimental effects to community economic development on both a global and a personal scale. I was interested to fill in my gaps in experience and knowledge with a more thorough understanding of environmental and social justice at home in the US. Though **Evergreen's Graduate Program on the Environment** seemed like a good fit, it was the existence of the

"Sustainable Prisons Project" (as it was called at the time) on campus that sealed the deal for me.

Thanks to a generous **Sara Bilezikian Memorial Fellowship** supporting students working for justice in the environmental arena, I was able to begin my time as an MES student even as I moved to Olympia from out of state. I had also emailed SPP staff before I arrived, applying for a job that didn't exist yet, but thanks to some persistence and a fortuitously timed grant, I became the Education & Evaluations Coordinator for SPP. Alongside my studies, I spent my two years at Evergreen running a pair of **lecture series** at Stafford Creek Corrections Center and Washington Corrections Center for Women. I also worked to evaluate SPP's various **ecological conservation** programs. Out of this effort grew my Master's thesis, examining the social and human effects of



participating in SPP's conservation programs on the inmate technicians who cared for frogs, dogs, butterflies, and prairie plants.

In the years since graduation, I have mentioned SPP in every job interview I've had, as well as dropping it into casual conversation on dates, and with strangers sitting next to me on airplanes. **We may forget it on our super-green Evergreen campus in the "upper-left" USA, but SPP's model is *fascinating* to people.** Working with state agencies, prison staff and inmates, academics, and volunteers from the community gave me the skills needed to engage across cultures and value sets to achieve a common purpose. These experiences translate, and they have continued to pay off as I've gone on to work in international development and education, and in my current position as External Affairs Manager for **The Nature Conservancy** in Washington. Now more than ever, cooperation and collaboration with perhaps-unlikely partners for the good of people and the planet is the way to go, and I am proud to have been a piece of SPP's important and continuing great work.

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## Environmental Ed for Juveniles in Detention

By Sadie Gilliom, SPP Turtle Rehabilitation Program Coordinator

When **Rachel Stendahl** started work with the Sustainability in Prisons Project in 2013, her dream was to become a marine ecology professor. However, something about her experience as an SPP **Roots of Success** Coordinator must have stuck: in the years since she left SPP, she figured out how to bring environmental education to juvenile detention centers!

After researching the relationship between paths of whale migration and shipping, Rachel graduated from **The Evergreen State College** with a **Master's degree in Environmental Studies**. Rachel was hired by **Educational Service District 113** to be their Regional Science Coordinator. She took over the job of running a watershed education program called the **Chehalis Basin Education Consortium**. This program supports stewardship of the Chehalis Basin watershed by providing environmental education resources to educators. Through this program, hundreds of youth throughout the Chehalis Basin watershed learn how their watershed works, how to test the water quality of their streams, rivers, and lakes, and how to present their water quality data



*Rachel Stendahl talks with a Roots of Success instructor during a graduation celebration for students of the environmental curriculum. Photo by Joslyn Rose Trivett.*

After getting into the swing of things, **Rachel realized that not *all* of the students in the Chehalis Basin were being provided these same hands-on learning opportunities.** In particular, she was concerned with the students inside of juvenile detention centers. **With the help of another previous SPP employee, Bri Morningred, Rachel successfully completed, submitted, and was awarded the No Child Left Inside grant.** Rachel began to implement a new environmental education program at the **Lewis County Juvenile Detention Center**.

SPP shared Rachel's internship opportunity on their listserv and I applied for the job. We worked together to coordinate the first-ever environmental education program provided to the youth at the detention center. It has been a great success! Rachel plans to continue the program and hopes to expand to [Green Hill Juvenile Detention Center](#). Go Rachel!

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## Inspiring Students



*During an MES fieldtrip to the Elwha River, Carri (purple raincoat), talked with MES students and adjunct faculty Sarah Hamman (blue raincoat, also an SPP partner!). Photo by Shauna Bittle.*

spent three years as a faculty member in Evergreen's [Graduate Program on the Environment \(MES\)](#) and had the distinct pleasure of mentoring sixteen thesis students. Of these students, half of them also worked as SPP Graduate Research Assistants, and four of them did their thesis projects on SPP. It was through many months of collaborative learning about their thesis research that I really got to know these students and their strengths and passions. They are inspiring individuals! Many of them enrolled in the MES program and moved across the country with the hope of being able to work for SPP. The MES program's interdisciplinary curriculum and opportunities to do thesis projects that blend natural and social sciences make it an ideal partner for SPP. We like to think of SPP as a fantastic example of the three pillars of sustainability in action (environmental stewardship, economic cost saving, and social justice), so it is easy to choose aspects of the program to study from many angles. We are grateful for the dedication, enthusiasm, and time SPP Graduate Research Assistants put into their work for SPP. Their work is clearly appreciated by SPP staff, WA Corrections employees, incarcerated students, their

### By SPP Director for Evergreen Dr. Carri LeRoy

While reading a draft of the newsletter this quarter, I was overwhelmed by memories of SPP students past, inspired by SPP students present, and could barely contain my excitement about meeting the SPP students of the future! One of the great benefits of being the Co-Director on the Evergreen side of the SPP partnership (SPP is a partnership between [The Evergreen State College](#) and the [Washington Department of Corrections](#)) is interacting with our phenomenal undergraduate and graduate students.

I was able to cultivate particularly strong relationships with SPP graduate students while I



*During the first national meeting of SPP programs in 2012, Evan Hayduk and Carri LeRoy talk during a tour of Cedar Creek Corrections Center. Photo by Shauna Bittle.*



peers, and outside agencies (as evidenced by the articles written in this issue of our newsletter). Our students have gone on to pursue PhDs and do excellent work after graduation for federal, state, and non-profit agencies. Evergreen students are truly a force to be reckoned with, and our SPP graduates are an elite group! I thank all of you (past, present, and future) for your contributions to SPP!

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**Sustainability in Prisons Project (SPP)** brings science, environmental education and nature into prisons. We work cooperatively with diverse individuals and organizations to create prison programs and bring benefits to partners inside and outside the fence. To learn more, contact us at [spp@evergreen.edu](mailto:spp@evergreen.edu) and communicate with us through our social media sites:

[sustainabilityinprisons.org](http://sustainabilityinprisons.org)

[www.facebook.com/sustainabilityinprisons/](https://www.facebook.com/sustainabilityinprisons/)

[twitter.com/SPP\\_WA](https://twitter.com/SPP_WA)