

Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Laura Kelly, Governor

To: Juvenile and Adult Facility Residents and Family Members

From: Jeff Zmuda, Secretary

Date: June 19, 2020

Re: Coronavirus Updates

Each one of our facilities and work sites are seeing positive things happening. The Norton Correctional Facility (NCF) recently shared a great story on social media about Steven, one of their dog handlers. Steven is currently working to train his 12th Second Chance Homeless Pet Society dog. There is a lot more to it than just training a dog, he said. "This may be the dog's last chance at life and to find a forever home." Steven grew up in a home that loved animals and over the past couple of years, he would call his mother each night so they could share dog stories. His mother was so supportive of his work that she was even able to adopt one of the dogs he had trained while at NCF. Unfortunately, after a long battle with kidney failure, Steven's mother passed away last April. "It was a true blessing to be able to share each of my dogs with her," he said.

One of the most touching parts of his story is how he relates his work with these dogs to his own personal story. "One of the reasons I do so well at training dogs is because I know how it feels to be locked up, abandoned, and forgotten about," Steven said. "I have been locked up for five years and have six years to go. I've lost my parents, grandparents, cousin, and four friends that have passed away, and I have been divorced after 18 years of marriage," Steven said. "Even through all this sadness in my life I have used the ability God gave me to help these dogs."

Stories like Steven's demonstrate the power of second chances. They reveal the ability that we as an agency have to help our residents make positive changes in their lives. Even though Steven and all of our residents have made mistakes in their lives, we all have. While a portion of our role at KDOC is to provide accountability for their mistakes, I'm encouraging our staff to look for the good in others and display a measure of kindness and compassion as we help these men, women and youth prepare to successfully reenter society. Ultimately, an approach that blends accountability with a support for change best serves our population, communities and all of us.

As a reminder, we are only updating our COVID-19 numbers once per week, and those updates will appear in the Tuesday message each week.

Have you heard someone say, "We need to be ready for when the virus comes back in the Fall?" I've heard that or a variation of it several times lately from community members, the media and even our own staff. It's a well-meaning statement, but it implies that the virus is gone and not a threat to us now when we know that it is still very much present throughout our state and the world. Health officials indicate that we will be battling this virus consistently until a vaccine is in place. Let's not lose our focus or let our guard down. We must remain vigilant both at home and at work. As we

begin to resume some normal functions of our facilities, let's be smart and make sure we're washing our hands regularly and applying social distancing rules whenever possible. Wear your mask when you will be in close contact with others. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.