



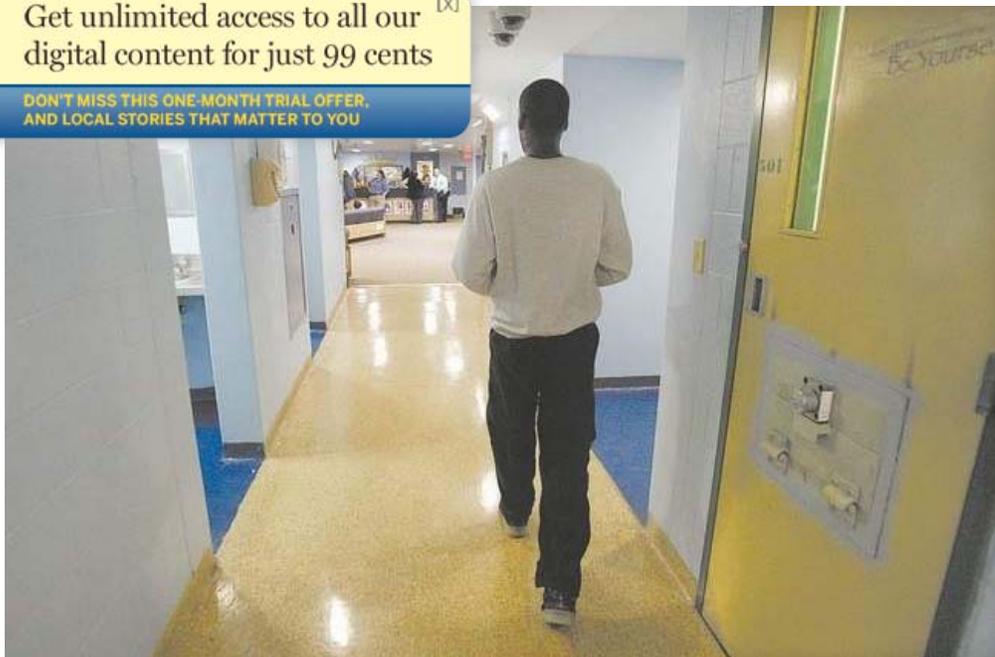
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Assaults drop, population shrinks in youth prisons



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IndeOnline.com Kevin Whitlock |

An Indian River inmate walks from his living quarters out to a group room in the mental health unit.



Christina McCune
IndeOnline.com staff writer
Posted Nov. 22, 2013 @ 9:20 pm

MASSILLON

"I've done my fair share of badness," said a 19-year-old man Thursday, addressing 10 other inmates seated in matching light gray sweatshirts and navy blue pants at Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility.

"I am now a graduate," said the man, whom The Independent was asked not to identify. "I never thought I'd be that. I applied for college. I think if I was in a different institution I wouldn't be in this position I'm in now."

He spoke to others in a mental health unit during a daily meeting where students are recognized for good behavior. Staff members and supervisors applauded heartily to show their support as teens received coupons for showing character.

A year ago, the man was violent and committed assaults — even against fellow youth and staff members at Indian River. On Thursday, he told his peers he would be going home Monday, and he planned to pursue a

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The meeting closed with unit manager Bobbi Leasure asking: "Where are we at today?" The youth responded in unison: "One step closer to going home."

ASSAULTS DECLINE

Youth prisons throughout Ohio are seeing a decline in the number of assaults, according to a report released last month by a legislative committee that oversees Ohio's prisons and youth services facilities. Indian River had the highest number of inmate assaults among the state's facilities, but it also houses the most violent inmates. And with more than 135 inmates, it's the second largest facility in the state.

Assaults are defined under Department of Youth Services policy as causing or attempting to cause physical harm to another.

In October, the Correctional Institution Inspection Committee (CIIC), reported a 31 percent decrease in assaults in 2012 in the state's youth prison system compared to the previous year. The report found 1,106 substantiated assaults in 2012. Also, the report cited a drop in fights. There were 514 fights (physical contact involving two or more youth) in 2012, a 30.7 percent decrease from a year earlier.

Indian River Juvenile Correctional Facility at 2775 Indian River Road SW in Massillon had the highest number of youth-on-youth assaults and youth fights last year. The data does not take into account whether the same youth was involved in multiple assaults. Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility in Delaware had the highest number of youth-on-staff assaults.

Indian River had a lower number of youth-on-staff assaults in 2012 compared to the other institutions. Cuyahoga JCF had 38 youth on staff assaults, Indian River had 130, Circleville had 152, and Scioto JCF had 243 youth on staff assaults.

Trials in Stark County Common Pleas Court are coming up in December for four juvenile prison inmates 18 years and older: Christopher Griffin, Lameer Kidd, Cozted Phillips and James Spaight, who are charged with aggravated riot, a felony, and assault of a corrections officer, stemming from an August fight at Indian River.

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