TECHNOLOGY TRAINING IN PRISON LEADS TO EMPLOYMENT PRE-RELEASE
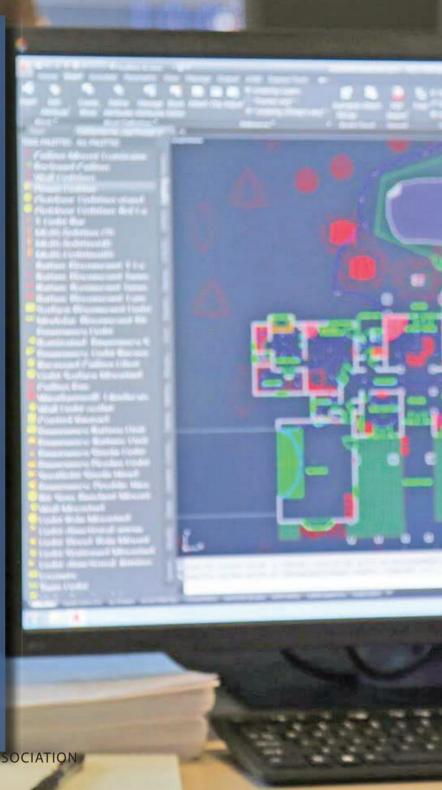
Through public/private partnerships, California expands rehabilitative technology programs
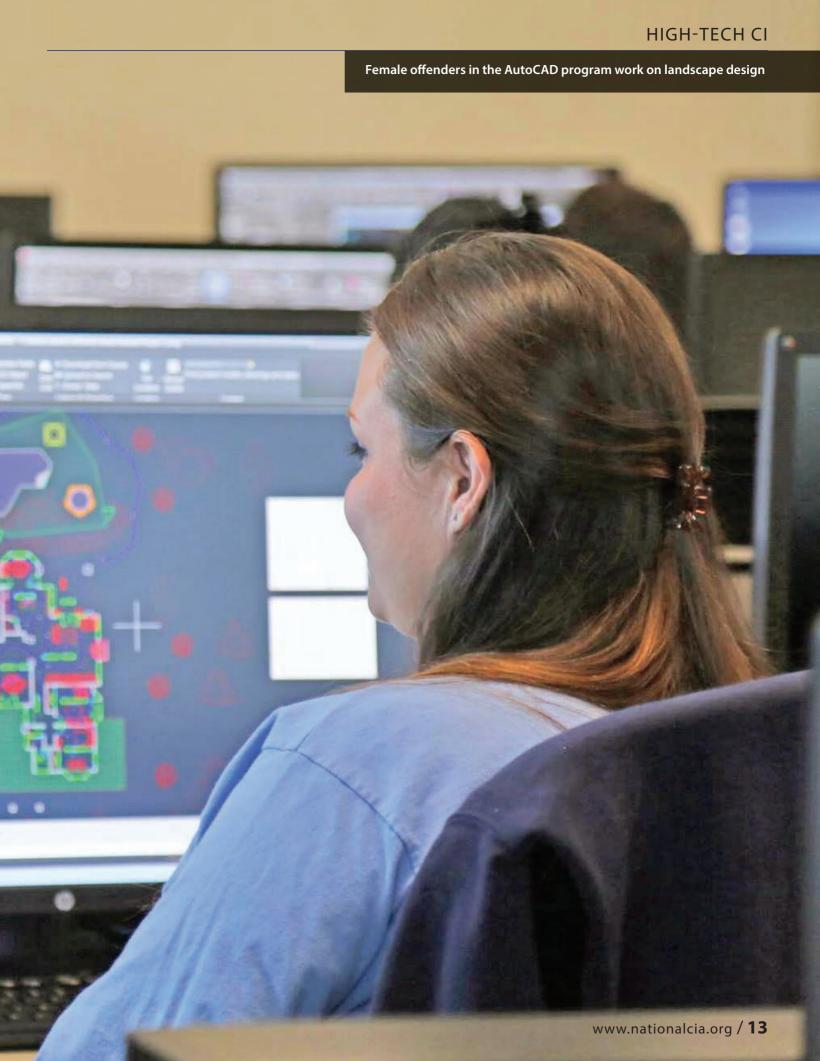
BY MICHELE KANE, CHIEF, EXTERNAL AFFAIRS, CALIFORNIA PRISON INDUSTRY AUTHORITY

Code.7370

Near San Francisco, California, is a computer coding school that is also an incubator for high-tech learning. Little known publicly, it has nonetheless drawn the attention of national leaders, prison reform advocates, Hollywood stars, and even Facebook Founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg. What is unique about this coding school: it is housed within the walls of San Quentin State Prison. Next to the busy prison yard, north of the tower, and behind a 100-year-old, nondescript brick wall, is a buzzing technology center where offenders learn real-world technology skills in computer coding, graphic design, and web development. The trained offenders then use those skills to work on technology products for private companies before leaving prison while earning industry-comparable wages.

The Code.7370 program first launched in 2014. It is managed by the California Prison Industry Authority (CALPIA), a self-supporting state entity that provides job skill training to over 8,000 offenders in 35 California institutions, in partnership with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and San Francisco non-profit The Last Mile. Participants learn computer coding skills required to become web developers and future software engineers. Program participants learn under the guidance of CALPIA employees and Silicon Valley volunteers and representatives. They then create their own distinct programs and applications, all without having access to the internet.

Female offenders in the AutoCAD program work on landscape design

Former Senior Advisor to President Obama, Valerie Jarrett visits Code.7370

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"Our top responsibility in corrections is to ensure public safety, and one way to do that is by keeping offenders busy with work and motivated with training opportunities," said Ralph Diaz, Secretary of CDCR and Chair of the California Prison Industry Board. "Secure technology training like Code.7370 helps to make sure that offenders have the skills, knowledge, and ability to succeed in a high-tech world."

The program has already had a pronounced effect on the student-offenders, offering them the opportunity to envision a future for themselves that involves applying their newly acquired technology skills and earning a living making competitive market wages in an industry in need of such skills. This, in turn, is having a strong positive effect on statewide recidivism rates.

Technologists and executives from the Silicon Valley business community developed the course syllabus and help administer the instruction to the 28 offender class. During the six month program, offenders learn HTML, CSS, Javascript, and Python. There is a second six month component of advanced training that has the junior coders utilizing their skills to build technology platforms for mobile and desk top applications.

Aly Tamboura graduated from the first class of Code.7370. While in the program, he rose to every classroom challenge and learned the intricacies of coding. On a bright fall afternoon in 2015, Tamboura along with his classmates, had the opportunity to meet Zuckerberg during the Facebook founder's tour of San Quentin. Three years later, Tamboura now works for the man he met while in prison: He is now the Manager for Technology and Program

Delivery for the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, a San Francisco company founded by Zuckerberg and his wife Dr. Priscilla Chan.

"I commend CALPIA, CDCR, and The Last Mile for having the vision to look for new and innovative programs to offer career training in correctional facilities," said Tamboura. "Code.7370 taught me cutting-edge technology while modeling the classroom environment with real-world software development culture. And by promoting collaboration and creativity, Code.7370 prepared me for employment in software engineering and for the tech culture."

The Last Mile (TLM) Works – Joint Venture Program

Select graduates of Code.7370 are eligible to work for the Last Mile's other non-profit, TLM Works, a Joint Ven-

ture Program operated adjacent to the training classroom authorized under the federal PIECP Program. This first-of-its-kind business model launched in July 2016 and offers a smooth transition to real-life, client-based work opportunities and upward mobility for Code.7370 graduates.

The Joint Venture Program allows private businesses to operate behind the walls of prisons while paying industry-comparable wages to offenders and teaching them marketable training and job skills.

The men in TLM Works develop websites and other technology applications. They work on a wide range of topics from health, education, and public safety, and even designed the social media dashboard for Airbnb.

Tamboura worked in the TLM Works Joint Venture Program as a software developer, putting his newly learned skills to work on real projects brought in from clients outside the walls. "In a technology-based society, I believe one of the keys to lowering recidivism and promoting clear paths to employment for men and women leaving

NCIA WELCOMES NEW MEMBERS

Correctional Institutions (California)

Avenal State Prison
CA City Correctional Facility
CA Correctional Center
CA Health Care Facility
CA Institution for Men
CA Medical Facility
CA Men's Colony
CA State Prison, Corcoran
CA State Prison, Los Angeles
Calipatria State Prison

Central CA Women's Facility
Correctional Training Facility -
   Salinas Valley State Prison
Folsom State Prison
Kern Valley State Prison
Mule Creek State Prison
Pelican Bay State Prison
Richard J. Donovan
   Correctional Facility
San Quentin State Prison

Jeremy Elder
Practitioner

Earl Grant
Practitioner

Shawn Hemingway
Practitioner

Timothy Kortes
Practitioner

Melissa Minnich
Individual Associate

Safety Vision
Corporate Plus

Nikki Weihe
Student

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Former Code.7370 graduate Aly Tamboura now works for Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

prison is to teach and promote technology inside correctional facilities."

The Last Mile Co-Founders Chris Redlitz and Beverly Parenti strongly agree. They see the success stories and advocate for more technology rehabilitative programs inside the walls.
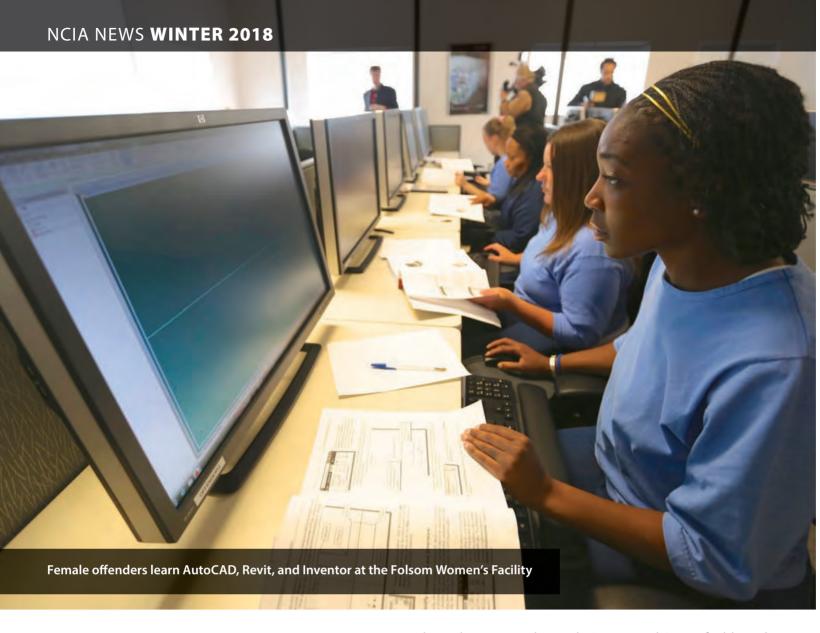
"Introducing technology-based rehabilitative programs helps offenders obtain meaningful careers when they leave," said Parenti. "Code.7370 speaks for itself when it comes to recidivism. So far none of our graduates have come back to prison."

Since offenders in TLM Works perform coding without Internet access, the company also employs free staff supervisors to review and transmit client projects via traditional internet communication protocols such as email and remote file sharing. TLM Works has the ability to build any custom full stack application with increasingly complex features and can perform coding projects no differ-

ent than you would see developed in a similar technology firm not housed in a prison.

"The work experience gained by this Joint Venture Program will greatly increase their employability as software developers upon release," said Redlitz. "TLM Works guarantees these men will have effective job skills, a meaningful portfolio, and the savings to build upon when they go out into their communities."

AutoCAD

Two hours away in Folsom, California, on a grassy hill at the highest elevation in Sacramento County, California sits a new Autodesk-Authorized Training Center that looks out over the Sacramento Valley to the West and Folsom Lake to the east. It is located above the Folsom Women's Facility adjacent to Folsom State Prison and provides expanded capacity for 56 female offenders to learn Computer-Aided Design (AutoCAD), Revit, and Inventor.

Female offenders learn AutoCAD, Revit, and Inventor at the Folsom Women's Facility

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The program launched in 2014 and the new Training Center opens more opportunities for female offenders learning tech. With the expansion of the program, Joint Venture opportunities can be created with private businesses similar to that of Code.7370 at San Quentin.

The new Training Center is not only state-of-the art modular construction but was designed, fabricated, and installed by offenders at Folsom State Prison's Modular Building Enterprise and Folsom Women's Facility offenders working in the CALPIA Carpenter's and Laborer's Pre-apprenticeship program.   The technology center is a prime example of the hands-on, real-world experience received by the offenders in developing the design plans, performing the construction work, and ultimately seeing their work come to fruition.

Through a partnership with CALPIA and San Rafael-based Autodesk, the software provider for people who make things, the program provides women software training in design job skills in architectural, mechanical, and engineering fields.

Autodesk provides the software and training curriculum, and Autodesk-Certified Instructors employed by CALPIA provide the training, guidance, and mentorship. Students initially learn basic computer skills, blueprint reading, basic math computation, measurement and scale, as well as interview skills. Then they learn CAD drafting, such as drawing revisions from markups and developing detailed drawing of assemblies, sub-assemblies, and component parts, using Autodesk programs. The women earn Autodesk accredited certifications and they are able to include their projects into their personal work portfolio when applying for jobs.

Autodesk Global Channel Development Manager Nancy Tremblay said this is the first Autodesk-Authorized Training Center in a correctional facility, and Autodesk is excited to be part of this project. Tremblay explained that the computer skills the women learn are highly marketable in today's job market. "It's not about the offender, but the citizen. Someone with the proper training in Auto-CAD, Revit, and Inventor is going to find employment." Autodesk has also partnered with community based organizations to teach Autodesk software skills to offenders post release, "More than 90 percent of former offenders trained in Autodesk programs have gotten jobs," Tremblay said, "and 82 percent of them are still employed after a year."

Proven Results

Code.7370 and AutoCAD are part of CALPIA's successful Career Technical Education (CTE) portfolio. The CTE program has a cumulative recidivism rate of less than 7.1% and is one of the most successful vocational training programs in the country. The average cost to house a CDCR offender in a California prison is over $76,000. "Every graduate who finishes the program is one less cost to taxpayers and one more successful contributing member to society," said Charles L. Pattillo, General Manager of CALPIA and Executive Officer of California's Prison Industry Board. "Offenders need to have real-world job skills when they return to their communities and investing in secure technology programs makes sense."

The Road to Expansion

CALPIA, CDCR, The Last Mile, and Autodesk are making great strides to insert technology programs into offender rehabilitation in prisons and are helping with the State's efforts to bring offenders into the 21st century pre-release.

At its June 28, 2018, Board meeting, the California Prison Industry Board approved $14.6 million to continue to expand CTE programs, which includes Code.7370 and Auto-CAD, as part of a $256 million operating budget for 2018-19. Besides San Quentin, CALPIA has expanded Code.7370 to three other institutions in California, including the

Business representatives visit Code.7370 at San Quentin State Prison

California Institution for Women, Pelican Bay State Prison, and the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility. The Last Mile has expanded coding programs at other institutions including the Indiana Women's Prison in Indianapolis.

Besides the Folsom Women's Facility, CALPIA, CDCR and Autodesk expanded the AutoCAD program to Pelican Bay State Prison where the first set of graduates completed the course. AutoCAD will soon be available to offenders at San Quentin State Prison in 2019.

New Learning Management System - Key to Expansion

The prison environment is often not conducive to high-tech learning due, justifiably to safety and security concerns but moreover, access to qualified trainers due to the remoteness of some prison facilities. To enhance the ability to distribute Code 7370 course content, CALPIA and CDCR contracted with TLM Works to develop a new Learning Management System to facilitate course instruction in all facilities.

The new Learning Management System software utilizes the open-source platform Canvas and has been customized to work in the non-connected environments in prison, since offenders cannot have direct connectivity to the internet. All sites that offer Code.7370 will have access to the system to ensure students are provided with the consistent teaching materials, resources and course content. The Learning Management System will also operate as a customized off-line search engine that will allow offender access to a large array of resource content provided by outside companies.

"The collaboration between CALPIA and The Last Mile is an example of how public and private partnerships can work together successfully to find innovative solutions. First, with Code.7370, teaching offenders contemporary skills that will fast-forward them to successful reentry, and now the new Learning Management System, we will now have the ability to more cost-effectively expand our technology program and share resources with other prisons in California, even the ones furthest away from Silicon Valley," said Pattillo. The Learning Management System will also allow the Code.7370 program to be replicated and implemented in other interested states where previously not possible. We hope that this type of training will be adopted in other states as a means of reducing recidivism through career training and CALPIA welcomes any opportunity to assist our correctional partners in program development.

For more information on the California Prison Industry Authority, please visit **www.calpia.ca.gov**.

For more information on the Last Mile training visit **www.thelastmile.org,** and for information on The Last Mile Works, visit **www.tlmworks.org**

NCIA Wishes Farewell to Karen Brown

This autumn, Karen Brown said her goodbyes to CI and accepted an appointment to Deputy Commissioner for North Carolina Motor Vehicles. Leading NCCE since 2002, Brown is the longest-serving Correctional Industries director in North Carolina history and is a major thought leader on Correctional Industries' national stage. In her 16-year career in CI, she contributed to our community by serving on NCIA's Board of Directors, Reentry Task Force and Best Practices Committee, where she advocated increased focus on reentry and developed national standards of excellence for Correctional Industries programs. Karen has been on NCIA's Board of Directors since 2007, serving as Ways and Means Chairperson, Treasurer, President-Elect, President, and Board Chair. A gifted speaker and conference staple, she chaired the Sales and Marketing track at the 2007 NCIA Conference in Jacksonville, FL and also hosted both the 2008 Southeast Regional Conference and the 2013 NCIA National Conference in Charlotte.

Reflecting her deep commitment to the NCIA and its mission and vision, Karen's leadership has resulted in NCCE implementing or expanding utilization of all ten of the best practices outlined in the NCIA Correctional Industries Best Practice Model. Karen Brown has set an example for leadership in corrections, and her contributions to the business and culture of Correctional Industries will be felt for decades.