

The new Monroe County, Indiana, Jail Commander, Kyle Gibbons, invited the group Care Not Cages (via Sydney) to visit the Jail to see the changes being made to make the place more humane.

The previous sheriff, with the assistance from the County Commissioners and by some obfuscation of the County Council (limited tours and access) and disinterest of the public, had let the facility go to ruin. More importantly, the sheriff and staff had treated all of the people inside as if they were seriously violent and unreasonably harmed people trapped in the facility.

Besides the decades of dirt, there were policies in place which confined people to a cell for 23 hours a day. The plumbing was in disrepair, with clogged and non-functional toilets and drains, leaky pipes, and water corrosion to the fittings of the showers. The roof failed and was not repaired.

The meals were delivered to people in their cells and through slots in the door called "bean holes" which had accumulated years of food grime. It was unclear but seemed as if all programs offerings were halted a few years ago during the pandemic and not restarted. Family visits and visits in general are only available via the expensive video and telephone systems.

When I visited the jail, I saw that processing and people awaiting processing were on the first floor close to the "sally port."

(Note from Google: The purpose of a sally port is to deter, defend, and delay against unwanted entry [or exit]).

Perhaps the proximity of the sally port to the processing area is supposed to reduce the amount of force required to transport people from the police vehicle to "detox" and the two intake holding areas.

Commander Gibbons said a few times that the intake process is an important part of acclimatizing people for their stay as inmates. Also on the first floor is an unused "reentry dorm" housing twelve or so bunks and a small living area. Later from community members on the NewsFeed of CareNotCages I learned that the Centerstone

organization once had a grant to utilize the "reentry dorm" but a funding issue prevented it from continuing. The third and fourth floors housed all the other people detained at the jail, I was told. The elevator is the primary means of access and exit to and from the upper levels, though there are also keyed stairwells which we used. Whether awaiting trial or serving time, people were placed into (I think) three categories and physical areas - minimum, maximum or segregated quarters and then further categories of male, female and trans. I am not sure of the policies regarding the placement of trans people in this facility.

The layout is not like anything I have seen in the movies, long corridors with bars, but the design was smaller more pods-like areas some have an interior staircase to a second row of cells and maybe 32 beds and others all on a single level. There is a "work" area for meal preparation and laundry. This area had music playing in the laundry room and people cleaning the kitchen, with incarcerated people moving freely around the entire area.

There is one "classroom" centrally located which can be configured as one large room or two smaller rooms. GED prep classes were being held with two people attending. Commander Gibbons commented that new office furniture was being unloaded and that there are plans to update the classroom technology with whiteboards and updates to the tables and chairs. Lastly, there are two areas for "recreation", one of them outdoors.

I heard Commander Gibbons comment that the design of this facility has challenges but is feasible. He knows of other facilities which have a preferable single story and centrally managed area design. The cleanup of the floors was ongoing and many plumbing issues corrected but there are more maintenance tasks to be performed before the Commander moves from an "emergency repair" status to a more "general maintenance" status.

*The RFQ presentations by the jail construction companies for a new jail facility have been recently completed even as the location for the facility is still unknown.

Key takeaways :

- Gibbons toured the Stride Center but did express to me management and oversight of that area or the efforts toward directing police officers or people to that Crisis Response Center.
- I felt that people with felony charges are lumped together despite the great variation within that large category—and, IMHO, stigmatized.
- It was Commander Gibbons's opinion that adequate health care services are being provided by Advanced Correctional Health (ACH) , including:
 - on-staff nurses;
 - transport to and from medical appointments; and
 - timely continuation of prescriptions during incarceration.
- Video surveillance is complete, meaning there was not a time that I felt that I was not being watched. I later confirmed this when we viewed the monitoring setup in Commander Gibbons's office to see the completed changes to the sally port which should reduce damages.