

BEHIND THE WIRE

COLLEGE IN PRISON PROGRAM | WOMEN'S HURON VALLEY | December/January

WELCOME BABY EAGLES!

Author: ANGELA FISHER

Upperclassmen affectionately refer to you as “Baby Eagles” and it is our deepest desire to see you soar in both your academic and personal life. The community you’re now a part of encourages each of you to explore every aspect of the EMU educational experience and please take advantage of the extensive resources available to you. This includes our peer mentor program, which each of you have been assigned for the beginning stage of your journey. There are evidence-based studies that speak to the success of peer mentoring and its always nice to have someone in your corner that has already walked the path you’re on. Just think of your mentor as one of the newest tools helping you build your successful future.

Other resources, which you can read about in this newsletter and ask other students about include: a wellness club, business club, and a writing club that are all student-run, the EMU Writing Center (visits twice monthly through the semester), and if any one is in need of additional tutoring, that can be arranged through Meg (CiP Director) as well.

EMU fosters inclusiveness, each person brings a different and needed perspective to every encounter and we encourage you to show up as your truest self and know that you will be accepted. We are here to support you and champion you with integrity and patience. We are so happy that you’re entering our community and hope you’re educational experience is deeply fulfilling and leaves you seeking more. It is often said that education is power, it also is liberating and elevating. We are here alongside you lifting as we climb.

Everything to Know About Reentry

Author: AMBER MARTENS & ASHLEIGH SMITH

Incarcerated individuals facing reentry can often find that feeling overwhelmed or anxious takes away from the excitement of leaving prison. The students enrolled in EMU’s CiP program however have added support provided by the program’s reentry resource, spearheaded by the Social Work Department’s favorite trio: Bonnie Miller, LMSW; Jenny Fritz, PhD; and Barbara Walters, PhD. To learn more about this program we interviewed Barbara, her answers have been edited for length and clarity.

The intention of this program is to help relieve some of the worries our incarcerated students face when being released. The efforts of “the trio” are based on a “person-centered” approach, meaning that we know each student’s reentry needs will be unique.” Due to this view, careful consideration is taken for each individual and their situation. Upon release, every person faces different challenges; that’s why this is a much needed resource for students navigating this path. The facilitators are excited to be involved, in fact, Barbara even said “it is a privilege to be a part of a student’s reentry journey!”

In an effort to gain insight on the student’s experience, we interviewed one of the participants right before her December release, Garcia. When asked about her experiences she responded, “There is no lack in resources at all with EMU! They are amazing and bring an over abundance of support and resources. If you don’t have someone to pick you up they will come and give you a ride...honestly just the emotional support has meant the world to me and they even offer counseling through the university.”

We asked Barbara where she’d like to see this program in 3-5 years, she responded: “We’d like to see this reentry program expanded in terms of its reach and impact....we strongly believe that reentry services should ideally be offered as early as possible because early supportive intervention helps students better prepare for the transition back into the community. Participating in reentry services long before release would allow for more holistic transition planning which would give students more time to prepare for the emotional, educational, vocational, and social aspects of the reentry process.”

To better serve program participants regarding employment post-release, Barbara explained: “We maintain an extensive network of reentry focused community partnerships, which includes agencies and programs that specialize in workforce development and employment support for returning citizens.” Garcia spoke about this aspect of the program as well saying, “my greatest lesson was when Tom (from EMU’s Career Center) came in, he’s the interview/job coordinator and he gave us lessons and tips on interviewing...the help extends further after release, Tom can help find jobs through his network of people in the field you’re working towards.”

Each person’s reentry needs are different, thankfully the facilitators understand this and explain, “through our reentry programming, we work with students to explore what types of support they’re seeking. We know that reentry cannot be a one-size-fits-all experience so we strive to help connect students with systems of support that are most important to them within the communities where they will be living.” Garcia adds, “My advice is make a list of your questions and concerns and this can speed up the process of addressing your needs.”

The resources this program offers is just one of many that EMU has brought to the students at the WHV campus. It’s yet another example that further demonstrates their passion to cultivate change within the system. This will have a long-lasting impact on the student - both while they’re here and once they’re at home re-integrating into society.

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Important Dates

JAN 20, 2025
NO CLASS; MLK DAY

FEB 23-MARCH 1, 2025
NO CLASS; WINTER BREAK

APRIL 18-20, 2025
NO CLASS; SPRING RECESS

APRIL 21-25
LAST WEEK OF CLASS/EXAMS

Editor Letter

Author: ASHLEIGH SMITH

Dear BTW Readers,

Hello and thank you for checking out the latest issue of Behind the Wire, the newsletter for our community. We strive to be an accurate representation of the collective EMU student body at our campus and we welcome everybody's contributions.

Inside this issue you'll see the latest updates on familiar columns, including: student clubs, staff spotlight, CiP Highlights, community prompts, book reviews, and recipes alongside articles on topics like reentry and politics "inside." We officially welcome our newest co-editor, Angela Fisher, author of the "Politics Inside" piece and the welcome letter to new students.

There's lots to enjoy and we're so glad you're taking the time to read about our program and community. Keep an eye out for the posting informing everyone of our next call for submissions and you could see your contribution in print!

Stay tuned,
Ashleigh Smith (co-editor)

University Writing Center Services Available at WHV

Author: ASHLEIGH SMITH

One of the most challenging aspects of classes at EMU for many of us are the written assignments. Whether its formatted as a reflection, a literary analysis, an argument, or as a response, throughout our time as EMU students we can be sure that we'll eventually be expected to write in each of these styles. Thankfully, for any students that feel they could benefit from some assistance, the EMU Writing Center comes to the WHV campus several times each semester for one-on-one consultations.

When asked if they noticed any differences between assisting main campus students versus WHV students with writing assignments, Shelby Taylor (PTL) responded, "during my only time consulting with WHV students, I noticed they were definitely more engaged and prepared for their meetings with us. That is not to say that students [on main campus] do not adequately prepare or engage, but I just find that WHV students are slightly more passionate about their work. I find the lack of technology to be the biggest difference, and this may be why WHV students are more prepared - because they have to be."

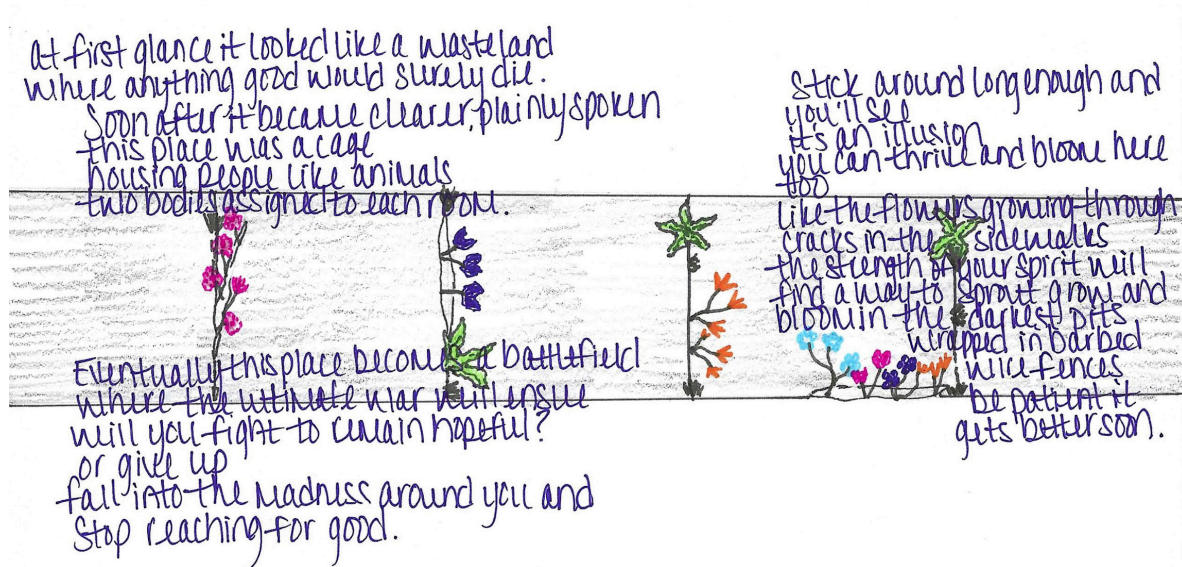
Brandi Wentworth was a first-semester EMU student last semester and she frequented the center throughout the term. When asked if the Writing Center appointments she attended were helpful to her she responded, "Yes, I have found that utilizing the writing center has been very helpful. With each person I've worked with not knowing me personally or my writing style, I feel they've helped push me outside of my comfort zone, in turn improving my abilities."

I was curious to learn if any Writing Center staff had experienced anything that surprised them. Thankfully, the answers I received were only positive. Pam McCombs (PTL) told me, "the biggest surprise for me was how invested the WHV students were. The conversations I had were very engaging, thoughtful, and honest."

All students should keep an eye out for this semester's writing center schedule (Meg sent it out via JPay on Jan 16.) If there's any urgent writing needs before your appointment, Rachel Dick (PTL) explains, "It's definitely okay to reach out through JPay with questions...the level of detail/specifics involved with the question may impact how helpful we're able to be over email/messaging." Students can utilize the Writing Center by choosing, "Ann Blakeslee" under their JPay contacts.

*A reminder to please make all Writing Center appointment requests to Meg.

"What Does Prison Look Like?"



For this section we've listed a prompt and asked for submissions to be creative (poem, illustration, comic strip). Look for the next issue's topic on our Call for Submissions flyer!

Reentry Con't

We'd really like to give a huge thank you to the staff facilitating this program as well as every EMU faculty member who has shown compassion towards each student at the WHV campus. All the help to relieve the stress of transitioning into the community is welcomed and appreciated. Garcia may have summarized it best: "There is a genuine concern and care they have that makes you feel like you matter...this makes a world of difference ...I want to thank them for everything they do and I highly recommend being a part of this program - it is life changing."

[CiP Cohort member N.Garcia was recently released from WHV and has transitioned to EMU's main campus. We'd all like to congratulate her and wish her the best of luck. Thank you for sharing your insight on the reentry program and for being an active member of our community until your last day!]

EMU WHV Campus Clubs & Programs

W.H.O.L.E. M.E. (Wellness Club)

“Defining Wellness”

Author: ASHLEY SHADE - PRESIDENT

The WHOLE ME Wellness club began as a place where like minded people could come together in search of something greater, not in a spiritual sense, but in a mental and physical sense.

Being incarcerated within the walls of WHV is a constant strain on both our mental and physical well-being. As students of EMU, its extremely important to us to build a community of strength, hope, positivity, and wellness; but what is “wellness” exactly?

For some students, wellness is:

- “Doing yoga and practicing mindfulness and meditation.” - A.Fisher

- “The health of mind, body, and soul.” - C.Moore

- “A combination of mind, body, soul, mental, and physical health.

Wellness is a lifestyle, but its also about listening to your body giving it not what it wants but what it needs.” - M.Rowley

- “A personal wellbeing of your physical and mental health, as well as self care.” - L.Snell

As for myself, I always believed that wellness was a state of mind. Finding a way to cope with and/or be content in different areas of life.

In actuality, wellness is defined as all of these things. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines wellness as: “being in good physical and mental health.” There are essentially eight (8) dimensions of wellness in our lives that we can focus on and continually improve: physical, Intellectual, social, spiritual, occupational, financial, environmental, and emotional. In *Words of Wellness Vol. 4*, Peggy Swarbrick PhD, OTR, CPRC, writes: “People who have high levels of wellness may have more resilience which is the ability to deal with and bounce back from various kinds of challenges such as stress, emotional trauma, physical pain, and illness.” Finding a balance between the eight dimensions of wellness in your daily life will ensure that you are not only striving to achieve wellness, but that you are also seeking a better quality of life. For more information on WHOLE ME, reach out to a club member or Meg Lechner.



WHOLE ME CLUB (L to R)

(Back): A.Smith, A. Martens, A. Fisher, L.Stuer, A.Shade, A.Bracy, M.Rowley.
(Front): T.Combs, S.Draper, L.Towle, M.Lemons

Writing Club

Author: ASHLEIGH SMITH

As our student body expands, topping 40+ for the upcoming semester, implementing additional student clubs and programs to interest more of the CiP participants is an exciting aspect of being a part of a larger cohort. Our program has already started student led clubs focused on business (BOSS) and health and wellness (WHOLE ME), created and implemented a peer mentorship program, and allowed space for a team of student editors to collaborate and publish this bi-monthly newsletter - all since EMU classes started in the Fall of 2023. Our next offering will be a Writing Club, which will begin meeting in the Winter 2025 semester and will be supported by a familiar face to many of us, Professor Christine Hume.

Some of you may be thinking to yourselves that you are sick and tired of all the writing - why would we need a club for it?! This will be a space for interested students to collaborate and workshop their writing. Its not intended to be for writing assignments for classes (see the EMU Writing Center for that!) but it will be a meeting of writers so assistance on assignments isn't out of the question.

We intend for this space to be a community environment to work collectively on the revision process, share our work, and navigate the submission process to (hopefully) publish finished work. This will also be a place for the newsletter team to work on upcoming issues of Behind the Wire and the future yearbook publication.

If any of this sounds like a good time to you, keep an eye out for the announcement for meetings in the near future!

BOSS CLUB (L to R)
(Back): A.Shade, J.Moore, Q.Lovett, T.Edwards
(Front): M.Kemp, A.McClinton, T.Edwards, M.Lemons



PEER MENTORS (L to R)
(Back): A.Smith, A. Martens, A. Fisher, L.Stuer, A.Shade, (Front): Q.Lovett, J.Moore, S.Draper, T.Towle

Staff Spotlight Author: AMBER MARTENS

Our last issue gave us insight into Meghan Lechner so we've decided to focus on the recent addition to the CiP team in this edition, let's get to know Jenelle Yarmoluk. She bowed out of her career in corporate America amidst the COVID-19 pandemic and is now working on her Bachelor's in Social Work; completing her required internship with the CiP program with Meg and becoming an amazing source of support to the WHV students as well. Whether its researching questions, mentoring support, or just a friendly uplifting exchange, Jenelle has shown up to fill in wherever she's needed, always just a JPay message away.

When asked what surprised her the most or what she didn't expect regarding this program she answered, “One of the most surprising things about the students at WHV is their tenacity and dedication to their education. There is a commitment and drive that I don't always see with students on main campus, and its incredibly inspiring.” This recognition is something that each of us can be proud of.

We each can also take pride in Jenelle's response when asked what her biggest takeaway was from this experience, which was, “it is to never underestimate a student that is eager and willing to learn. Even with countless barriers and limitations, the students at WHV have shown me that with enough drive anything is possible, even when the world tries to tell you otherwise.” I know I'm not alone when I say thank you for becoming a part of our community, Jenelle.

How would you Vote? and why?

Harris

Trump

BECAUSE IM A WOMAN + I WANT TO
KEEP ALL OF MY RIGHTS!

Election Inside Author: ANGELA FISHER

Politics are often a topic many like to steer clear of because it tends to incite strong emotional reactions. With that in mind, I carefully navigated holding a mock presidential election on Nov 5, 2024, surveying the community of students attending both EMU and Jackson College that reside in Dickenson's B side. As a part of this process, discussions among peers regarding their thoughts and concerns pertaining to both candidates were conducted. These conversations at times became heated and strongly worded as we all hold opinions (both our own and others) in high regard. As a whole, these discussions were lively and impactful and resulted in an important takeaway: these conversations, where we both listened and shared, are sorely needed. We achieved what many delegates have been unable to do, agree to peacefully disagree.

I have been incarcerated since the age of 22, and I've never participated in any formal election process. I decided to hold this mock election for two reasons: one; to feel a part of this monumental election cycle and two; to motivate peers, many of who are leaving here soon, to get involved politically. I was pleasantly surprised at the level of interest and unity we shared as a closed and gated community during this historical time. While our own election results did not reflect our nation's collective decision on the 47th president of the United States, I'd like to share the results of this experiment. Our pool of voters totaled 66 Individuals; 8 votes went to Trump, 41 went to Harris, 1 to the Green Party, and 16 abstaining.

Following the discussions and mock vote, after the excitement of the election calmed down a bit, and a few days before Christmas, I had the opportunity to sit down with one of our participants of this experiment and an incoming EMU student, Tashiena Combs-Holbrook. I wanted to hear her perspective of this mock vote and her understanding of politics as well as the importance of participating in local government elections. This transpired by both a Q&A session and an open discussion. The Q&A session is included below, some responses have been edited for length and clarity:

Q (Fisher): What is the first thought that comes to mind when you think of Donald Trump and Kamala Harris?

A (Combs-Holbrook): I believe that Trump is a media genius/a performer. He utilizes his presence on social media to expose problems he has heard and then manipulates people by exposing the dark side of our systems and its weaknesses. He forces you to research and critically think about the issues he raises. My first thought on Kamala Harris was that she did not address "real issues" during her campaign.

Q: Was there one moment during either campaign that secured your vote?

A: No, not one moment per se. I voted in our mock election, and would have voted in the actual election, for Kamala Harris - solely because she is a Black woman. I understand that this is not a critically thought out answer but due to the lack of support women have for one another, or the proper way to make important choices I feel it is necessary to fully support female empowerment - I would have voted for Hilary Clinton also because she is a woman. I'm hopeful to see a female president in my lifetime.

Q: Have you ever participated in an actual presidential election? If so, who/when?

A: No, not in a presidential election, however in the 90s, I cast my vote for Jeffrey Fieger when he was running for Governor of Michigan. I was personally motivated due to my brother's incarceration and I had begun to notice Black men being removed from schools and communities at alarming rates. I didn't understand a great deal about politics at the time, but I did understand enough to know that local elections had a direct impact on me and my neighborhood.

Although Mrs. Combs-Holbrook didn't vote for Donald Trump, she can see him as a way forward for our country. After this discussion and interview with her I admit that I have begun to possibly see a similar path forward. Reflecting back on this entire experiment, I'm happy to judge this as a successful one. I was able to achieve my ultimate intention that led to this process, to invoke open and honest conversations with my current community about real life topics.

How would you Vote? and why?

Harris

Trump

he is a business man and this country is
a business. I don't agree 100% with him ^{always} but...

CiP Highlights

Student Kudos

- **SHIRKIANA DRAPER:** First Graduate of the EMU Bachelor's Degree Program!
- **ASHLEIGH SMITH:** Recipient of the 2024-25 Al Davey Creative Writing Scholarship Award from EMU's English Department.
- **ANGELA FISHER:** Newest co-editor for Behind the Wire
- **NANCY ABERNATHY, AMBER MARTENS, LORIE STUER, and ASHLEIGH SMITH:** Creative Writing submissions accepted by the 2025 Oakland University Art Review.
- **N.ORTIZ-GARCIA:** First WHV campus student to transfer to EMUs main campus.

Personal Goals & Accolades

- **ANNESSA MCCLINTON:** Has lost 24 pounds in her Healthier Living Journey and completed the Beyond Violence program.
- **AMBER MARTENS:** Completed the Blackstone Paralegal Degree Program with honors.
- **KETA BAILEY:** Earned a promotion and is now working in the bakery.
- **KIM WONSEY:** Completed both the Beyond Violence and Houses of Healing programs.
- **ANDREA BRACY:** Received her state certification and is a Peer Support Specialist. She also received her CDL license.

COMMUNITY PROMPT

“What does LUXURY mean to you?”

In this issue we're asking students to tell us what "LUXURY" means to them. The lens of incarceration drastically alters one's perspective, our collection of responses illustrates this well.

- "A luxury isn't a necessity, but its something to make you feel good. It's something to always be grateful for." - Cara Moore
- "Luxury is spending time with my family, doing what is right for God, forgiving myself and others, giving to the needy and showing love in all situations as much as I can."
-Michelle Jessup
- "Warm sun on my face and love in my heart."
-Heather McKee

- "Soaking in the bathtub with coconut scented bubble bath, tropical smelling candles burning, and 80s soft rock music playing. To be able to lay back, close my eyes and escape from all my stress and worries for an hour."
-Brandi Wentworth
- "Luxury means not necessarily money and riches, but the ability to have the freedom to go and do whatever your heart desires."
-Morgan Rowley
- "Laying in bed for as long as it takes to me to read the WHOLE book."
- Ashleigh Smith

"Not having to press a shower button every two minutes." - Amber Martens

"Having people In your life who believe you are worth and enjoying whatever you have." -Keta Bailey

"Right now, luxury means taking a bath and sleeping in a comfortable bed."
-Quiana Lovett

"Luxury to me has come to mean living this exceptionally beautiful spirit-filled life that fills me beyond capacity with the fruits of the Spirit."
- Shirkiana Draper

"Luxury is enjoying the finer things in life. It's not lost on me that, while incarcerated, my view of luxury Is having an opportunity to study in a well designed post-secondary program. Trust this luxury of higher education to the fullest. -Jeneva Schaub

THE ALCHEMIST

PAULO COELHO

This novel focuses on a young boy's journey and destiny to seek his personal legend. Throughout his adventure, he is presented with many situations that reward him with valuable life lessons - one of which teaches him that life is not mere coincidence but instead that everything happens for a reason.

FICTION

(Recommender: Morgan Rowley)

BETWEEN SISTERS

KRISTEN HANNAH

Anyone with a sister knows that its complicated. This novel explores that dynamic through life's betrayals, heartbreaks, joy, and sadness. Be prepared to shed a tear or two by the end of this wonderfully written story focused on this complicated sisterhood.

FICTION

(Recommender: Amber Martens)

SCARLET IN BLUE

JENNIFER MURPHY

Set in South Haven, Michigan, this novel pulls readers in and then captivates them with a story that is part mystery, part thriller, and wholly gripping. We're passengers on the journey of young Blue and her mother, Scarlet. The pair is always on the run and mandated (by Scarlet) to change their names by randomly selecting crayons. What happens when Blue decides she doesn't want to keep running? Will whatever has been chasing the finally catch up? Read this story to find out.

FICTION - Michigan Writer

(Recommender: Amber Martens)

RECIPES

In this issue, we're including a super sized recipe section because of the many additional submissions we've received! Many are great for a holiday treat!

PEANUT BUTTER PIE

BY: CAROL POOLE

1 pkg Chocolate Creme Cookies
1 jar Peanut Butter (crunchy or creamy)
1 pkg Swiss Miss Cocoa Mix
Optional: Cookies, Candies, Nuts for topping

-First Layer: Make chocolate crust from 1/2 cookies with cream filling removed.
-Second Layer: Mix the remaining 1/2 crushed cookies without cream filling with 3 scoops of peanut butter. Then mix cookie/peanut butter mixture with chocolate drizzle made from cocoa (heat cocoa with small amount of water until you have a thick sauce texture.) Layer on top of chocolate crust.
-Third Layer: Mix cookie cream filling with 1-1.5 scoops of peanut butter and layer on top of previous layer.
-(Optional): Drizzle more chocolate sauce or suggested toppings.

SWEET & SAVORY MORNING SNACK

BY: ANGELA FISHER

1 Bagel
1 pkg. Jalapeno Cream Cheese
1 pkg. Strawberry Jam

-Tear or cut bagel into bit size pieces and place in a bowl.
-Open cream cheese and jam and squeeze both onto bagel pieces and fold items into each other.
-Heat for 45 seconds in microwave and let cool for 1 minute.
-Enjoy with a mango drink stick and/or coffee.

EASY PEASY BANANA BREAD

BY: LORI TOWLE

1 bag Vanilla Wafers
2-3 bananas
Hot water or Milk

-Crush all Vanilla Wafers and place in bowl.
-Add hot water (or milk) 1 cup at a time until wafers become a thick batter. Set aside.
-Fold bananas into batter, do not over stir.
-Place bowl in microwave and set for 6 minutes.
-After cooking, check with toothpick method using a spork instead. If spork comes out clean, its ready, if not, cook in 1 minute increments until spork comes out clean.
-Let cool and enjoy!

KICKIN' FRITO PIE

BY: N.ORTIZ-GARCIA

1 pkg. Chili (no beans)
1 tub of Cream Cheese
1/2 bag Refried Beans
1 bag Corn Chips
1 Meat Stick
Hot Sauce (to taste)
Jalapenos (to taste)

-Cut up meat and add to chili.
-Add a scoop of cheese and hot sauce and 1/2 coffee cup of water - mix and set aside.
-In additional bowl make refried beans and add a cup of jalapenos.
-In additional bowl, crush corn chips and add water to get into a mush for a crust.
-Layer refried beans mixture on top of corn chip mixture.
-Layer chili mixture on top of refried beans mixture.
-Finally top with the rest of the cheese (melted) drizzled over the top.
-Reheat for 3 minutes in microwave and ENJOY!

BETTER THAN "PAYDAY"

CANDY BARS

BY: TRACY LEIGH

10 packs of sugar or sweetener
8 oz. creamer
8 oz. hot water
1 3oz. pack of caramels
5 single serve packs of salted peanuts
1 Chick-O-Stick (Crushed)
Optional: Crunchy Peanut Butter

-In a bowl, mix: sugar, creamer, and hot water - stir well
-Boil in microwave for 7-9 minutes or until it is thick and caramelized (like fudge)
-Add the caramels (to melt) making sure to stir constantly to prevent boiling over.
-Add small amount of water if needed or a large scoop of crunchy peanut butter to thicken if needed. Once thick, add in peanuts a Chick-O-Stick, stirring mixture until everything is coated in syrup.
-Pour contents into plastic to form into a log and roll to candy bar-width. Allow to cool and then cut into bars.
-Enjoy!

DIRTY RICE

BY: CAROL POOLE

1 pkg. Mackerel (or any fish)
1 pkg. Chili (no beans)
1 cup Jalapeno Chips
1 pkg. Hot Peanuts
3/4 bag Minute Rice
1/4 Pickle
1/2 pkg. Chili Ramen Seasoning
Optional: Sausage or Jalapeno Peppers

-Cook rice and add remaining ingredients except chips.
-Crush chips on top of rice and let set for a few minutes.
-Enjoy!