

Press Release

State of Maryland
Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services



DPSCS Communications Office Contacts:

Mark Vernarelli ~ 410-339-5065 ~ mvernarelli@dpscs.state.md.us

Danielle Lueking ~ 410-339-5011 ~ dwilmsen@dpscs.state.md.us

Martin O'Malley
Governor

Anthony G. Brown
Lt. Governor

Gary D. Maynard
Secretary

www.dpscs.state.md.us

The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services protects the public, its employees and the detainees and offenders under its supervision.

WCI To Donate 1,000th Inmate-Made Pillowcase To ConKerr Cancer Foundation

Monday, December 7, 2009 at 11 a.m.

TOWSON, MD (December 3, 2009)---Western Correctional Institution in Cumberland (WCI) will donate its 1000th inmate-sewn pillowcase to the ConKerr Cancer Foundation's founder on Monday, December 7 at 11 a.m. at the prison on U.S. 220 S.

Begun by WCI's Assistant Warden Dr. Harry Murphy, himself a cancer survivor, the inmate-made pillowcase program made history when it became the first such effort in the nation earlier this year. Cindy Kerr, whose teenage son Ryan died of cancer recently, came to WCI to see the pillowcase-making operation, and on Monday will return there to load 16 boxes of pillowcases for the trip back to her southeastern Pennsylvania home.

The idea got its start when Murphy, a highly-respected veteran prison administrator, was watching a group of children who were about to undergo cancer treatments as he was waiting for his own treatment. "I was sitting in the oncology clinic," he says, "feeling anxious. And I noticed some young children waiting. All of them had hair loss and were pale as ghosts. But every one was joking, laughing, seeming to enjoy life in general. It struck home to me. *I had no complaints!*

"I started to wonder: did anyone actually do anything to help children go through the process, or try to put smiles on their young faces? I began an internet search. That's when I discovered ConKerr Cancer. I thought colorful, whimsical pillowcases to help brighten a child's hospital stay were a wonderful idea."

ConKerr Cancer's founder, Cindy Kerr, began sewing pillowcases days after Ryan's death. Her foundation has distributed thousands of the colorful pillowcases to children's cancer hospitals nationwide. She is excited about returning to WCI to see Dr. Murphy and the inmate pillowcase makers.

###