

## **We Are All Bound Up Together: Art and Stories From Behind the Walls**

PSU's Higher Education in Prison (HEP) program launched in 2019 with a single class offered at Coffee Creek Correctional Facility (CCCF), and has grown into a full bachelor's degree pathway in Liberal Studies, with a Business Minor option. Currently 65 students at CCCF are fully enrolled at Portland State University and are pursuing their degrees.

### **Mission**

Our program's mission is to provide access to rigorous, quality higher education for people experiencing incarceration, and to support students post-release.

### **Vision**

HEP's **vision** is a community where the transformational power of education is accessible to all, changing lives, opening doors, reducing recidivism and enhancing community safety and well-being.

### **Art Class and Exhibit: Coffee Creek Correctional Facility**

Through generous funding from the Wilsonville/Metro Community Enhancement Grant, we were able to offer an art course at CCCF in Summer term 2024. This not only fulfilled an arts requirement for students' degree pathway, but also allowed the students to explore their own identities, as related to place. The art highlights where students come from, where they are now, and where they envision themselves in the future. The art will be exhibited in the Wilsonville Public Library in April. We are excited that it will be technology-enhanced. Viewers will be able to use their smartphone to scan areas of the art and hear more from the artists themselves. We hope this will help to break down stigmas and reduce barriers between people who live in Wilsonville *outside* the fence, and those *behind* the fence. We are, after all, all bound up together.

