

# Lewisburg Prison Project turns 40

By Marcia Moore  
*The Daily Item*

SUNBURY — The Lewisburg Prison Project has been a voice for thousands of inmates in Pennsylvania for 40 years.

The nonprofit organization will celebrate four decades of service this afternoon at Packer House with more than 85 supporters and speakers that include former state inmate Tina Spence, who now serves as an executive assistant at the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

"I do believe we make a difference," said Dave Sprout, a paralegal with Lewisburg Prison Project that serves about 42,000 Pennsylvania inmates in 33 county jails, 12 state prisons and eight federal penitentiaries.

The grassroots agency has been involved in several recent lawsuits impacting area

penal systems, including a class-action suit against Northumberland County for inadequate health care and poor housing conditions at the Sunbury jail that was settled by the county in 2010 for \$1.5 million and two pending lawsuits against Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary for cruel and unconstitutional treatment of inmates and a sexual assault claim filed by inmate Kim Lee Millbrook.

A unanimous ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court in March allowed Millbrook's suit charging three corrections officers guards with negligence, assault and battery to proceed.

Lewisburg prison officials deny the claims in both lawsuits.

Sprout said nonprofit groups like the Lewisburg

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Prison Project are essential since few attorneys are willing to litigate on behalf of inmates.

"The perception among

many is that (inmates) deserve everything they get. They're punishment is confinement, but I have never seen a court order that says people should be tortured or denied medical care," he said.

Most of the inmate complaints listed in the 250 or so letters Sprout's office receives each month concern medical and safety issues.

And it's not only the inmates that benefit when the agency intervenes.

Sprout said even a few corrections officers at the Northumberland County Prison thanked him for the work environment improvements at the North Second Street jail in Sunbury following the 2010 settlement.