

CORRECTIONAL OASIS

**A PUBLICATION OF DESERT WATERS CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH
A NON-PROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF AND THEIR FAMILIES**

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From The Old Screw

For Women Staff

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It seems that female corrections staff has at least three strikes against them before they even start their first shift. It is sad to say that some of these strikes are from fellow staff. For example, passes are made. If you say “No, I’m married”—strike 1. If you say “Yes”, and go out, you’re labeled a whore—strike 2. If you’re not married and still say “no,” then you’re frigid or a lesbian—strike 3.

Well, let me tell you this is wrong and always has been.

I was working in corrections at Kansas State Penitentiary when the first female staff came on duty. They did a good job even though at first they didn’t have to work all posts. There were a few, my present wife included, who would work anywhere and when told “no” would ask, “Why not?” My wife is only 5’2” but does not know what “back down” means if fellow staff is in trouble. I’ve had the honor to work with several female staff of this caliber.

Yes, a lot of the female staff could not handle Corrections. The thing though is, there were male Corrections Officers who couldn’t handle it either.

The one thing I did notice, and it still applies today, is that if the female staff carried themselves professionally, they got along better. They had less hassles than the ones who flirted, or the ones who tried to use their female status to get out of things, or to get male staff to do their jobs. It was a privilege to work with those who acted professionally, and there are some of them I would as soon have watching my back as some male Officers.

There always has been and always will be resentment from some male staff regarding the women officers. Yes, even the Old Screw had to make some adjustments. What I have to say to the guys is, *Get over it!*
Women staff are here to stay!

Some male staff and even some female staff are waiting for female staff to mess up, to do something wrong. The day a new female walks in the facility, odds are given as to how long it will be before a co-worker seduces her or some inmate gets through to her. Does this sound cold and hard? Yes, it does, and yes, it is. Thank goodness, not all staff are that way. Remember: there are odds on new male staff too. It is just that female staff gets the most attention.

If just one female staff out of a hundred fall by the way, it makes it so much harder for the rest who are professionals.

It is sad when inmates get a female staff caught up in some kind of game. Don’t think they won’t try. They will be the kindest, most polite and caring person you’ve ever seen. They can spot a lonely or troubled female staff a mile away and have all the time in the world to groom them, to work on them. Some inmates will take full advantage of staff’s loneliness or low self-esteem. Family troubles are an open door for the inmates, because staff let their guard down or are looking for comfort.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

Do your holiday shopping online through our Amazon store at www.givezilla.com/desertwaters. We receive a commission from every sale.

And may you experience a peaceful Christmas season filled with compassion, kindness, and hope. Let us celebrate our being visited and ever-so doggedly pursued by LOVE.



(Continued on page 2)

From The Old Screw**For Women Staff***(Continued from page 1)*

Hey, these guys will sometimes do anything to get out of a write-up or to score brownie points. Or they themselves are lonely. It usually starts off small.

Staff, male and female, have a bad tendency sometimes to want to talk to someone about things they don't want coworkers to know about, such as problems at home, husbands or boyfriends not understanding why they work in Corrections. If they start doing that with inmates—watch out! Trouble won't be far behind!

It is the responsibility of sergeants and other higher ranking staff to set an example for their staff. It does no good to tell female staff to watch out for this or that inmate because they have already taken female staff down. The term is "supervise," and no, it will not always work. You will lose some staff no matter what. It is a fatal attraction to some female staff, and nothing you do will make a bit of difference.

I have seen several female staff who got caught up in inmate games.

What female staff does not realize is that they are getting set up. There were times that the inmate was sitting in the facility investigator's office when he called a female staff at home or on her cell phone (she gave him the numbers) and asked for her to bring in certain items.

Another setup is he (the inmate) needs money. He has gambling debts, needs a TV, anything that will make the female staff worry about his safety or his happi-

ness. So she gives him money.

The worst inmate game is the love/sex game. Oh, he's so in love with her, he's never met anyone as kind and loving as her. He can't live without her, until: (1) they get caught and then "you used your position and took advantage of me;" (2) she wakes up and says "no" and has to deal with his threats and blackmail; or (3) other inmates hear him bragging about her and they ask her for a session too. (Don't think that hasn't happened.)



Both female and male staff must know that they are not alone in this, and that fellow staff cares.

The worst scenario may be when other staff push coworkers away from being part of the group through words or actions. More than once I have heard from female staff that, "The inmates treat me better than most staff." When that's what they experience, it may not be long before they turn to inmates for companionship and comfort.

Training, training, and more training helps. Supervisors who are approachable to their staff also help. When senior staff notices problems, they can sometimes stop them by paying attention to troubled staff and talking with them.

Both female and male staff must know that they are not alone in this, and that fellow staff cares. I can only tell you that Desert Waters' staff and the Old Screw do care. We would rather have a hundred calls from staff just wanting to talk and get something off their chest than hear of one set-up staff.

Take care, *The Old Screw*

Presentations**CCJA Symposium**

Caterina presented two trainings at this year's Colorado Criminal Justice Association's Symposium in Colorado Springs--Laughter Therapy and The Corrections Ventline. 26 staff attended the trainings.

Colorado Jail Association Meeting

Caterina presented on Desert Waters' services at the Colorado Jail Association's monthly meeting at the Adams County Jail. Thank you Wayne Jochem, Denver County, Laurie Leach, Pueblo County, and Robert McMahan, Douglas County. 53 Jail Commanders and other staff attended the presentation.

From Caterina's Desk

Law Enforcement's Toughest Beat

From email by jail C.O. Printed with permission.

Not a lot of people appreciate the safe environment we create for the public by keeping inmates in check, or the monies saved by avoiding lawsuits because we follow the myriads of laws we are governed by. First we have federal laws. Add to that State, county and local laws, and C.O.'s (Corrections Officers) end up being the most law-driven, most versatile persons in Law Enforcement. A chameleon approach is ingrained in us after a while. We adapt, we survive, we rule, we bend, we get the job done, and we blend in with the environment. Everyone knows we are there, but no one knows where. No one sees us get the work done, and not a lot a lot of people care if we do.



**Everyone knows we are there,
but no one knows where.**

When it is said, *Corrections is the toughest beat in Law Enforcement*, that is no understatement. Don't get me wrong, street cops face danger everyday, as well as probation and parole officers, as does everyone else who carries a badge—but their involvement is a constant. Someone breaks or “bends” the law a bit much and, once they are caught, it's hook 'em, book 'em and lock 'em up. Pretty straight forward. Their next dealings are at the opposite sides of a table in court or, if not, it's the “Let's Make a

Deal” court TV show. Either way, they have the option to run and get to a safe distance till help arrives. They have neat play toys, guns, pepper spray, batons, stun guns, tasers, the 12 gauge shotgun (my favorite), etc.

We C.O.s can go as far as a wall. We need to take control of a situation in a very short time with limited resources. Generally, we're outgunned from the get-go. C.O.'s deal with inmates one-on-one, face-to-face. We see the scams, rights, wrongs, personality flaws, strengths, and emotions of the incarcerated. A true *Peyton Place*, *Days of Our Lives*, you name the soap, and it is represented in jail.

Yes, folks, we are a part of the law enforcement community. We are charged with protecting the staff, the inmates, the public and ourselves in a dynamic environment that changes on literally a minute to minute basis.

Jail C.O. and Proud of It

Dear Jail C.O.:

We thank you for expressing yourself so eloquently on behalf of your fellow deputies. We on the outside are learning to appreciate you and what you do more and more.

Canadian Brother

From email by Canadian Correctional Officer. Printed with permission.

I would like to congratulate you on recognizing this part of Law Enforcement. Unfortunately here in Canada, our Corrections Service operates similar to your Navy Seals. The public knows we exist, but don't know who we are, what stresses are involved in our field, and the inherent dangers associated with our jobs.

I am envious that Corrections Officers in the US have been recognized as Peace Officers.

Just thought I would let you know that many of us in Canadian Correction follow your system very closely via Corrections.com. Your Correction Officers deserve the recognition they are receiving. Many have laid down their lives to protect the public and each other.

Thank you for not forgetting them.

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



*a non-profit organization
for the well-being of correctional
staff and their families*

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BLOGS

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<http://womenincorrections.blogspot.com>

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The Corrections Ventline™
1-866-YOU-VENT
(866.968.8368)
youvent@desertwaters.com

Shaking Off Workplace Negativity

© Caterina Spinaris, Ph.D.

Here are some goals and strategies to help you detox from the workplace and keep you “sane.” ☺

1. Cultivate a positive, meaningful life outside of work.
2. Nurture supportive relationships.
3. Promote a mental set that looks for the positive (ways for personal growth and ways to help others) in everything.
4. Practice a healthy faith / spirituality to get cleansed from the “slime” of the job, to develop a framework that helps you make sense of things, and to be recharged.
5. Keep reminding yourself what is worth pursuing in life and what your values are, and actively live out those values daily.

6. Develop effective coping skills, such as dealing with frustration without getting consumed by anger.
7. Engage in regular exercise, outdoor activities, hobbies, and interacting with healthy children and pets.
8. Look for opportunities to laugh.
9. If overwhelmed, seek counseling.
10. Learn how to let go and how to forgive.

Start by picking one of the items on this list that you are already doing. Begin to engage in it more regularly and intentionally. After a while, target another item on the list. Every step in the right direction adds up and makes a difference.