

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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Hanging Onto Hope

© Caterina Spinaris Tudor, Ph.D.

The essence of Corrections Fatigue is pessimism and cynicism, a hopelessness that does not see much value in yourself or others, or brightness for the future. You may operate in a correctional environment that is a spiritual black hole. You observe some staff treating coworkers poorly (or you experience such a treatment firsthand yourself). In the files you read, crime victims cry out. The population you house is a cascade of broken lives, tragedy and wasted potential. Antisocial thinking, addictions, poverty, generational abuse, racial injustice, mental illness—they're all there. You look for success stories and find very few. You may also look at your own life and not find many success stories (as you define success) there either.

That is why you need to hang on to HOPE. Hope that good things CAN indeed be attained, that everyone—yourself included—CAN respond to the call for improvement and regeneration, that life CAN get better. As we're coming to the Christmas and New Year's celebrations once again, Hope becomes an even more vital commodity. This is the time when we tend to take stock of our lives and make resolutions about the future. Owning up to consequences of our unwise choices can be very painful (although it can also become the motivator for positive change). Or we may feel victimized by life, because others are enjoying coveted privileges and blessings we're not. In addition, around the holidays, the offenders' collective heartache over their circumstances and their missing their families adds to the emotional turmoil.

At this time you need to dare to hope in order to grow wings and fly above the smog of negativity which hangs over your workplace and in your own mind. Hope that helps you rise above your circumstances will first begin to ENCOURAGE you. Hope will inject courage into you to begin or to continue on the journey of life-giving choices and actions. "The little

train that could" is YOU! Yes, you can, even if it is one teeny-tiny step at a time. Hope shows you life-affirming possibilities where you thought there were none.

Hope also gives you endurance to PERSEVERE on the good path. When you stumble and fall on your face, when you slide backwards, Hope is there to help you up, clean you off, and set you on the way of life again.

Through encouragement and perseverance, Hope makes you able to OVERCOME obstacles in your way, giants that you never thought you could defeat. Hope convinces you that, indeed, you can remove the mountains in your path, even if you can only do that one bucketful at a time.

Hope helps HEAL your soul. It heals you from fears and worries, as it proves to you that good things are possible. It delivers you from envy and jealousy, as you realize that you too can see your dreams come to pass. Ultimately Hope sets you free from the lie that you're not lovable, as it shows you the worthiness and beauty in people, including yourself.

If you're reading this and feeling really down, please call us on our anonymous 24/7 Corrections Ventline at 866-968-8368 or write us at youvent@desertwaters.com. Or reach out to a trusted friend, spiritual leader, or mental health professional in your area. We want to see you get through this low point safely!

IN MEMORIAM

PAUL REIN
Sheriff's Deputy
November 7, 2007
Slain by inmate he was transporting to the hospital

IN MEMORIAM

Robert H. Walter, Jr.
November 13, 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

PROFESSIONAL	2
DWCO CONFERENCE	2
WOMEN WORKERS	3
TRAINING	4
MANY THANKS	4

So Much More Than a Guard
I AM A CORRECTIONAL PROFESSIONAL
 Submitted Anonymously

I am a PERSON

I am young and old, tall and short, man and woman, and I am of all faiths
 I am a father, mother, brother and sister, I am a son and a daughter, and I am a single parent
 I am from all parts of this great country and I am a citizen of my community
 I wear a uniform, I maintain the highest standards and I represent my agency
 I see things that hurt my soul and damage my spirit, but I maintain hope
 I lead by example and I am a good and decent human being
 I have a family of loved ones at home and a family of partners at work
 I feel, I care, I rejoice. I am a **PERSON**

I am a WORKER

I am well-trained and part of a GOOD TEAM
 I work with men, women and youthful offenders; I work with many cultures, races and faiths
 I work evenings, nights and weekends, holidays and birthdays
 I stand a post, man a tower, carry a gun, I transport, search and move offenders
 I train staff, write policy, maintain standards and keep safety high
 I supervise good people and hold my partners accountable
 I maintain buildings, locks, vehicles, radios, phones, computers, fences and weapons
 I work behind the scenes in cramped offices to make sure the ship keeps running smooth
 I am sometimes verbally and physically abused, yet I maintain my professionalism
 I accept my work is stressful, and I maintain my honor.
 I am a **WORKER**

I am a PROVIDER

I provide good food, clean clothes, and I provide Protection
 I provide education, vocation, work skills and opportunity
 I provide GED, reading, writing and math classes, and recreation
 I provide medical, dental and vision care, I provide hospice care and dignity
 I provide re-enter opportunities, legal access and religious programs, I provide hope
 I provide mental health, substance abuse and anger treatment
 I provide a bed, a roof, warmth and food.

I am a PROVIDER**I am PROTECTOR**

I keep offenders safe while sleeping, working, resting and playing
 I supervise parolees and offenders in community corrections and ISP
 I provide suicide watch to protect people from themselves
 I control contraband and maintain facility and public safety
 I control access, I keep offenders in and others out
 I protect offenders, partners, visitors and volunteers from harm
 I protect the public, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year—all day, every day.

I PROTECT Them, Us and YOU

I do what I do because I serve my community, my agency, my state and my country.
 I am a Person, a Worker, a Provider and a Protector.
I am not a guard. I am your Correctional Professional.

First Annual DWCO Conference**REACHING BEHIND THE WALLS: Mental Health & Wellness for Corrections Staff**

Friday May 9, 2008, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO

Addressing workplace prevention, wellness & intervention for corrections staff, & mental health treatment approaches.

For all staff, incl. corrections supervisors, senior & mid-level managers, correctional trainers, & EAP providers.

Tuition: Individual: \$59.00; Groups of five from one facility: \$236.00. Time: 8:30am-5:00pm

More detailed information about topics & speakers will be made available in the near future.

From CO Jane

Women Correctional Workers

When I started working in a prison in 1989, women were not allowed inside without an escort. Female correctional officers were not the norm, as it is today. You could say, "We've come a long way baby!"

As a woman working in a high security male federal facility, I faced challenges I had never encountered in any other job, challenges which don't happen anywhere else.

Federal policy changed shortly after I started, and women were being hired as corrections staff. However, we didn't have many applicants. I don't think there were very many women who grew up wanting to work in a prison. I had wanted to be a ballerina!!!! Now there are women in every area of corrections doing very demanding jobs, and doing them very well.

For women, correctional work can be very difficult, especially in male institutions. We not only had to be concerned about the inmates, we also had to be worried about how the male staff would accept women working inside the walls. As women, we were caught between a rock and a hard place. There was a lot of "bad blood" in those days. Inmates loved having us around, yet some male staff hated it. Even in today's prisons there are male staff who believe women should not be allowed to work inside.

I hired into a unit secretary job at a high security prison in Indiana. It was one of the oldest federal prisons and had the reputation for being one of two facilities where the "worst of the worst" were housed. I was the administrative help for a Unit Manager, two Case Managers and two Counselors. They taught me a lot about the "do's and don'ts" of the business. They also warned me about inmates exposing themselves to me or masturbating in front of me. I can remember thinking to myself, *Surely not! This doesn't happen at work!*

Talk about naïve. I will never forget the first time it did happen to me. As I and another unit secretary turned into the hallway to get on an elevator, there

stood an inmate, completely exposed from the waist down. I immediately recognized who he was, as my unit counselor had warned me about him. The other unit secretary turned white and her eyes were as big as silver dollars. I guess her staff never warned her about anything like this happening. I immediately told the inmate to come with me to the Lieutenant's office, which he did without argument, because he knew the routine. I was angry, embarrassed and a little scared. If he had not done what I said, I probably would have lost my cool. When we got to the office, I went in and told the Operations Lieutenant what had happened. He took over from there and I was told to write the inmate up. I didn't quit understand what I was being asked to do, so I went back to the office and talked with someone who helped me do my very first incident report, the first in a long line of many more over the next 17 years.

Women face a very different mind set when they work in a prison compared to what they've been used to. Growing up we are taught to be ladies, conduct ourselves with manners and watch what we say. We are considered more sensitive than men. We are protected. We have to put all this old learning aside when we go to work in a prison.

Yes, women inside face different challenges than a man does, but we also bring a different dynamic to the atmosphere we work in. Both genders play a vital role in the daily operation of correctional facilities. In many instances in my own career, I calmed an angry inmate by the way I talked to him, whereas male officers at times might escalate the situation.

Women staff discover a stark reality when they work in a prison: They'd better get tough. They'd better grow some thick skin and learn not to show any emotion. They conclude that the worst thing they can do is show weakness. Showing weakness could open doors for inmates to manipulate them and for some male staff to give them a hard time. So women staff learn to hide their feelings, never admit to them, and try to ignore them at all cost.

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



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

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Go to <http://www.desertwaters.com/membership.htm>

Or order **The Old Screw's** article *The Man Next Door* engraved in gold on a wooden plaque. (To order, call or email our office.)

From the Old Screw

Training—Boring Or Necessary?

Yep, training is sometimes the most boring thing I've ever experienced. You sit in a classroom like a school kid, and here you are, a grown person, sometimes with your own kids in school. You think, *I know this stuff. I've had it time and time again. Do they think we're all idiots?*

But then I remember how it was when I first started in Corrections and how LITTLE training we received. I remember all the law suits that we used to have thrown at us, because no one had taken the time to explain things to us. The attitude was at times, SO WHAT? We never really worried about it. But, boy, do times change and do laws change, and sometimes not in our favor!

Slowly the powers that be decided that we need the training to help us better understand our jobs and our obligations. "So what" no longer applies to Staff actions or to the Administration.

We need refresher courses every year to bring us up on the latest changes. We need the latest in First Aid and CPR. You may save a life on the inside or the outside, even perhaps the life of a fellow Officer. You find out about your rights with the Department and the steps to take if you feel you have a problem. Even though it is sometimes a real pain in the backside and elsewhere, PPCT is one of the best things to ever come down the pike for Correctional Staff. And EVERY STAFF member needs to know how to shoot and the laws for shooting. The life you save just might be that of the person who complained so much about going to training.

It sometimes seems that we never use half the things we are taught in training, but you use them almost every day and don't even realize it.

The training instructors are a group of dedicated Staff who have for the most part been there and done that before you came along. It is not the easiest thing in the world to get up in front of your peers and give parts of the same class over and over again, and try to keep it interesting.

So take all the training you can get, be bored if you must, but learn, learn, learn. It is to your advantage and for the benefit of your career.