

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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How We Ended Up Here

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Since we're often asked questions about DWCO, I'd like to tell you a little about how and why we ended up doing what we are doing in corrections.

DWCO's mission is to help increase the occupational, personal and family well-being of corrections personnel. Our vision is corrections staff who are professionals, who are healthy physically, psychologically and spiritually, and who live well way past retirement.

DWCO was founded by my husband Ted Tudor and me as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation in 2003. Neither of us wanted to get involved in corrections. He was retired. I had moved to Fremont County (with its 12 prisons and jail) to semi-retire and play "farmer" while maintaining a psychotherapy practice. As a result of counseling and talking with corrections personnel in our county, I became aware of the need for more specialized services targeting corrections staff wellness.

With that awareness came a strong spiritual "nudge" to respond to the need myself, but I resisted the idea. I could feel the love my God has for corrections staff, but I did not want to get involved. Somehow I knew that doing so would require all my focus and energy—and more. And I was convinced that I was totally inadequate for the task. I'd never served in law enforcement or the military. I saw myself as too "soft," too mercy-motivated for the job. Plus I thought that being female would not help open doors for me in a male-dominated profession. :) So, my standard response to the inner prompting that wouldn't quit was, "Lord, send a man with a military background. They'll listen to him!" I'd often ask my husband Ted, "Why do you think the Lord wants us to reach out to corrections people?"

His answer was, "He heard their cry." Still though that would not move me to respond to the call.

After two years of trying to weasel out of this "assignment," I finally embraced it with both excitement and trepidation in December 2002. This happened only after I had a dream in which a voice which I knew to be the Holy Spirit warned me that if I kept refusing to step into the corrections arena, I would miss out on my life's calling. This may sound way too far out to some of you. Everybody has their own beliefs about spiritual matters. I just want to share with you how I ended up doing wholeheartedly something I had no interest in doing to begin with. Believe me, the dream I had terrified me. It was a very somber warning, like the last call to board a plane before departure. The dream helped me realize that I did not want to die and then discover I had squandered the biggest chance I'd been given so far to make a positive difference. So I repented of my willfulness and "signed on" in a hurry.

By the way, the message of this dream and your importance to my God still motivate me today. This is why I go to bat daily for corrections personnel who have been fighting for our communities for so long, often at great personal cost to themselves. And yes, not every day is fun. Often I am deeply grieved because of the needs and heartaches we encounter. Yet the rewards of serving corrections staff far outweigh the days of disappointment or anguish I experience, because one person being helped is worth the struggle.

IN MEMORIAM

Natasha Cournoyer
Correctional Service of Canada
Last seen alive 10/1/09

Rodney Scales
FCI Terminal Island
10/16/09

Ramon "Ray" Solis
FCC Victorville
10/24/09

Russell Currin
ADX
11/1/09

William Jerome Person
Caledonia Correctional Institution
11/2/09

Eduardo Caraveo
Fort Hood Army Base
11/5/09

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Approaching Distressed Staff

by retired Associate Warden

Statistics show the results of stress that Correctional Professionals experience. This issue should be dealt with head-on at roll calls and other opportunities with no minimizing.

Staff needs to know the warning signs of stress-related negative behavior and its effects on staff, families and friends.

Staff also needs to understand that help is available to cope with stress and that seeking such help does not mean staff are weak or aren't making the cut. Stress is a natural by-product of working in Corrections. When we are physically ill, it is natural to go to a medical doctor. When we experience emotional distress it ought to be natural to go to someone who can help.

It is never an easy task to approach a staff member who you, as their supervisor, believe is having personal problems. There is one rule that applies though. *Care enough to confront*. Staff members struggling with personal issues are not outwardly focused. Rather, they are inwardly focused. Such staff members are a detriment to themselves and to the safety of other staff and offenders. They are probably not fully aware of what is happening in their environment. Distractions may result in security failures. People can get hurt. Lives can be lost.

How you confront is just as important as that you do confront.

Let the staff member know your expectations and the importance of remaining focused. I trust you know your staff well enough that you can decide on the best approach to take with each one. Some require "kid gloves," others require more direct communication. The bottom line is that you are a supervisor in a correctional environment, responsible for the safety of the staff and offenders you supervise. Are you doing all you can to assure their safety within the policies of your facility?

Remember never to dismiss staff who is suffering as "weak" or "not worth the effort." The world's greatest

Leader once said, "Let he who is not guilty cast the first stone." Have you never struggled? How would you want to be treated if the situation were reversed? You are dealing with a person who needs help and perhaps doesn't realize it or doesn't know what to do about it. Care enough to confront, and do so compassionately.

Starting such an intervention can be a challenge. NEVER do this in front of other staff or offenders. Dignity and pride are important. If you take these away, you have lost the battle to help a staff member.

Privately confront the staff member by saying something like: "I am concerned that you seem to be distracted lately, not focused on your job. Is there anything you need to talk to someone about?" Ask them not to divulge personal information to you, especially of a medical nature, but tell them that there are professionals to whom they can speak confidentially. Get to know your staff well enough ahead of time so you can formulate the best approach for each case as the need arises.

Many jurisdictions have in-house services available to staff. Know these resources and make sure your staff knows them. Encourage the staff to avail themselves of these resources as needed.

Corrections is a difficult and stressful occupation and sooner or later most of us need to reach out for assistance to cope. It may become necessary to make this an expectation for some staff. Until the issue is resolved, you could perhaps assign the staff member to a less stressful post in the facility. Always be up front and honest. Let the staff member know you wish to help.

In the event your jurisdiction does not have in-house services of this nature or the staff member does not want to use them for whatever reason, the Desert Waters Ventline is an excellent resource for staff and their families, and it is offered at no charge to them. The Ventline can be accessed by calling 866-YOU-VENT or emailing youvent@desertwaters.com.

Call for Presenters

On May 6 & 7, 2010, DWCO will have its 3rd annual conference on wellness issues for corrections staff. The theme is *Creating a Healthier Culture*. The conference will be held at the Abbey in Cañon City, CO. Interested corrections and mental health professionals are invited to submit proposals to desertwaters@desertwaters.com for 50-minute presentations. Each proposal should include the presentation title, a paragraph describing the training, and the presenter's bio. More information about the conference will be posted on our website by January.

Servant Leadership

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A lieutenant who is respectful and available to listen and answer questions. A captain who helps subordinates secure training that enhances their skill sets. A C.O. who treats inmates fairly, mentors new C.O.s, and helps coworkers pull things together in their areas. A warden who shapes the facility's culture for the benefit of both employees and offenders.¹ A retired Director who volunteers his time to set up a program that improves the character development of both staff and offenders.

These are examples of elements of servant leadership.

The concept of the servant-leader was proposed by Robert Greenleaf.² Mr. Greenleaf stated that for servant-leaders, service comes first. Leadership is a secondary focus, sometimes occurring almost incidentally. Their primary motivation is to ensure that others' highest priority needs are being met. The pursuit of power, influence, fame or wealth is secondary for them, if it attracts them at all. When we think of servant-leaders, persons such as Mahatma Gandhi, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Jesus of Nazareth come to mind.

Servant-leaders do not emerge through a power grab. Rather, servant-leaders lead through their active concern for the betterment of others' condition. People grow to trust that servant-leaders genuinely have their best interests at heart, and as a result they freely choose to follow them and their vision for the future.

Servant-leaders have the courage to take bold steps and break new ground, and they invite others to join in.

Servant-leaders are honest and humble, as they recognizing their limitations and their need for others' input and contribution.

Servant-leaders are committed to their goals while remaining open to feedback. They want to see their vision realized regardless of personal cost. They care more about the fulfillment of the dream than about personal comfort, gain or glory.

One of the outcomes of servant leadership is the forward movement and personal growth of those around servant-leaders. Followers become better informed, their potential is more actualized, and their situation is improved.

Because of servant-leaders' ultimate goal—the genuine desire to improve people's condition—*servant leadership is not limited to those of highest rank*. Servant leadership can and should be practiced throughout institutions, organizations, communities and families. It is a matter of values, motives, vision and focus, not a matter of title.

Daily you are given opportunities to help meet others' high-priority legitimate needs—staff's, families', offenders'. What will you do with these opportunities? I urge you to expand your sphere of influence and become an agent of positive change by serving others. In serving you'll meet not only their needs, but also some of your own highest yearning for significance and joy. Try it. I guarantee you that you will never be the same. This day, what will you choose?

¹ Bartollas, Clemens. 2003. *Becoming a Model Warden: Striving for Excellence*. Lanham, Maryland: American Correctional Association.

² Greenleaf, Robert K. 2002. *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness*. New York: Paulist Press.

How We Ended Up Here

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As for Ted, he got on board as well and went from being retired to being re-tired, faithfully volunteering at DWCO about 20 hours a week. Now he is even preparing to serve as a corrections staff pastor/spiritual encourager. He has been my solid rock, my team-mate and, together with my mother, my cheerleader and encourager. DWCO wouldn't be where it is today without Ted's assistance and my mother's support.

DWCO is now a team effort of (mostly) volunteers. We have a dependable, hard-working and committed board. Over the past six years many talented, compassionate

and dedicated people have come alongside us—often people with no corrections background. They have blessed us with donations of hard work, ideas and financial gifts. Retired and active corrections personnel are a particularly indispensable resource. To all our collaborators and helpers we offer a HUGE "THANK YOU!"

Things keep getting better and better. Yes, we are grateful. Serving you is a privilege and an adventure, worth every penny and every ounce of effort. It is a joy to see corrections workers getting healthier and corrections families smiling again.

I wish you all a "sane" holiday season this Christmas and Hanukkah, and a good and safe 2010!

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



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

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MANY THANKS!

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Three Words

Candita McNeal

Through my many years with the Kansas Department of Corrections, I often get tired of hearing these three words... FIRM, FAIR, & CONSISTENT. Guess what? I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't taken those three words to heart! I firmly believe that if you don't abide by those "rules," you will not have what it takes to get the job done.

What comes to mind when you hear the word *Firm*? I think of determined, trustworthy, and steady. One must be reliable and trusted in order to gain the respect they want to enjoy.

When you hear the word *Fair*, what comes to mind? Another word could be *reasonable*, right? Treat others how you want to be treated, be open-minded, don't have double standards, don't punish people you don't like. In the environment where we work, it's hard not to form biases against individuals, but we are professionals. Be fair!

Consistency is about not acting on a whim, not changing your mind all the time, and not playing

favorites. It is hard to remain consistent in correctional settings, to work every day with the same attitude when many things happen, whether work-related or not. But *Consistency* is necessary for smooth running of operations. You can't imagine how many times I've heard inmates say, "I don't care how an officer is, as long as they are the same every day!"

So when you question how you are doing or wonder how to improve your skills, ask yourself...

"To what degree am I being

FIRM, FAIR, AND CONSISTENT?"

DWCO MISSION

To increase the occupational, personal and family well-being of staff of all disciplines within the corrections profession.

THE CORRECTIONS VENTLINE™

866-YOU-VENT

youvent@desertwaters.com