

# 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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## Leading In Corrections

As a leader ... being successful does not mean you give up accountability and performance expectations to achieve a higher level of respect and comfort. We believe it is a commonly held belief that you cannot have both. In other words, you cannot be a nice guy or gal as a "leader" and have performance expectations and accountability. We remember the traditional leadership myth of "Don't get too close to your staff. You may be the one that has to impose discipline later on." Too often this advice was taken as a convenient reason not to have meaningful relationships with subordinate staff. It is one of the most dysfunctional pieces of advice we have ever heard. It is a myth. In his presentation on leadership, Colin Powell said, "The day soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you have stopped leading them. They have either lost confidence that you can help them or concluded that you do not care. Either case is a failure of leadership."

We believe that great leaders have the ability to influence others through positive human relationships. If you listen to leaders you might hear them say, "I would love to spend more time talking and sharing my philosophies with staff". However, what follows

is usually, "My schedule will not allow it" or "I have too much on my plate." The irony of this is that if we mentor and build those individual relationships, our plates will not be so full. If you could ask yourself as a leader one question each day, it should be, "Have I positively impacted my staff in

a way that made them feel better about their work performance and themselves?" Investing in our employees emotional bank account and spending time to individually develop them is the key to motivation. When an employee feels that they play an important role towards the mission, they will work diligently toward it.

*Excerpts from Leadership For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Human Approach by Jason Heaton, Warden, Texas Department of Criminal Justice & Gene Atherton, Director of Prisons (retired), Colorado Department of Corrections. Reprinted with permission.*

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## Denver Post Article

On 3/24 and 3/25 the Denver Post published a report by Bruce Finley entitled *Prison horrors haunt guards' private lives*. The report also featured Desert Waters' programs designed to meet wellness needs of correctional staff and their family members. Thank you, Bruce, for your interest and persistence.

Here is some of the feedback we received by e-mail.

*What a great article! It really captures what many of us feel. It was comforting to me and I haven't been behind the walls for 8 years. It made me realize I am not crazy, that these feelings do exist in others also. I've been out 8 years and I still react to many situations as if I were still behind the walls. Thanks!*

(Continued on page 4)

## Trainings

Thanks to Warden Larry Reid, Caterina offered an introduction to stress management for Centennial Correctional Facility and Colorado State Penitentiary's 2007 Annual Block Training. A total of 540 staff attended.

Thanks to Shery Strand, Caterina offered the training *Corrections: Form Fatigue to Fulfillment* at Minnesota Correctional Facility—St. Cloud, MN, on 4/10 & 11, with 400 attending.

Thanks to Rosanne Harmon, Caterina presented the same training for the spring conference of the Oregon Chapter of the American Correctional Health Services Association in Eugene, OR, on 4/13, with 85 correctional health services staff attending.

### Upcoming T4T Training

#### **Correctional Staff Suicide: Prevention, Intervention & Postvention**

Date: June 4, 2007

Time: 9:00am-5:00pm

Location: DWCO, 431 E. Main St.

Fee: \$500.00

Trainer: Caterina Spinaris Tudor, Ph.D.

## From the Old Screw Why Me

Sometimes the anger lies so close to the surface  
 Sometimes I feel like screaming in the night  
 This is what corrections has done for me  
 I'm cynical, distrusting and have little feelings  
 Why did I, a fairly nice person and a good man  
 Take on a career that destroys so very much  
 Always hiding my feelings, showing no emotions  
 This is the job that I worked over half my life?  
 Why oh why dear God was I chosen for this  
 The sadness, the sorrow of humanity to see  
 But then I remember some good things  
 The closeness, the brotherhood, the feeling so free  
 We lived the fullest, not knowing how long we'd live  
 You'd risk your life for a person you only knew  
 Through this work, no first name, no personal knowledge  
 Just knowing it was a brother Officer, some one in dire need  
 Just run, not walk to the trouble, for it might have been me

### Training With DWCO

## Gary Cornelius

We at Desert Waters are honored to have Lt. Gary Cornelius (retired) join us as a trainer for jail staff. Lt. Cornelius has more than 30 years of experience in law enforcement and corrections, including jail operations and teaching criminal justice personnel. Lt. Cornelius is also a trainer for ACA, AJA and NIC. He has authored six correctional books, including: *Stressed Out: Living and Working with Stress in Corrections, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*; *The Art of the Con: Avoiding Offender Manipulation*; and *The American Jail: Cornerstone of Modern Corrections*, to be available in the fall of 2007.

Lt. Cornelius will be offering the following seminars through Desert Waters:

1. Offender Manipulation Prevention
2. Stress Management
3. Working with Difficult Employees
4. Time Management

## Corrections: From Fatigue To Fulfillment—Part IV

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The correctional workplace conditions that produce Corrections Fatigue undermine the satisfaction of seven key psychological needs.

### Physical Safety

By definition, prisons are not safe places. Criminals don't stop acting in criminal ways when they are incarcerated. Complacent, burned out or compromised staff add to the problem. Consequently correctional employees are chronically overly vigilant, scanning their work environment continually for danger. After years of doing this, the sense of apprehension generalizes to their whole life—both behind the walls and on the outside. Staff ends up having very few, if any, places where they feel safe.

*Don't ever let your guard down. Must never relax and get complacent!*

### Emotional Safety

Stressed people stress people. Correctional workers frequently state that their greatest source of stress stems from interactions with other staff. Such stressors take the form of negative rumor spreading, backstabbing, ridiculing, bullying, and verbally abusing other employees. Even witnessing other staff getting mistreated in this fashion results in employees feeling emotionally unsafe.

*They'll kick you when you're down. They'll ridicule you to make you give in.*

### Trust

Staff also learns that they can take nothing at face value. They may trust just a few choice people, and even then, not all of the time. They come to believe that no one in the "system" has their best interests at heart and are suspicious of others' motives. This results in interpersonal isolation and anxiety. Additionally, staff who have experienced a loss of self-control or who crossed policy lines do not even trust themselves.

*They'll just use you. They'll never come through for me. I can only depend on myself.*

### Power

Staff may feel powerless for a variety of reasons. They are understaffed. They are vastly outnumbered by in-

mates. They have little or no input over issues that affect them directly. And they have to contend with a multitude of rules and regulations, as well as with demands of supervisors. To create a sense of control, some staff strives to "win," to have their way at every opportunity. Others give up and become apathetic, counting the years till retirement. Yet others quit.

*I must always, always, always stay in control! I'm just a puppet on a string.*

### Respect

Inmates rarely value staff. Staff comes to believe that no one respects them. They in turn express scorn for others. Staff may not even respect or value themselves. And the general public is unaware of what corrections work is about, so they have little or no respect for staff.

*They're all useless losers. I'm just a number.*

### Connection

While at work, corrections staff cannot talk freely about their families, what they've been up to on their days off, or about future plans. Also, staff often operates alone, overseeing a number of inmates or in a control center. The prevailing mistrust in prisons also adds to the emotional isolation of staff. Re-entry into family life after being immersed in this type of disconnection during one's shift can be almost disorienting. Staff may "forget" how to be transparent and vulnerable with others. They become comfortable living behind walls—physically and emotionally.

*If you don't get close, you don't get hurt. So keep your guard up.*

### Meaning

People need to know that what they do makes a difference for the better. Corrections work is one of the most challenging professions in terms of creating positive meaning, a sense of lasting significance. The revolving door of recidivism leaves staff wondering about the usefulness of their work as rehabilitators. The negative staff interactions add to the sense of futility. As a result pessimism takes hold and pervades their mindset on the outside as well.

*What I do makes no difference. It will not get better. It's all useless. I'm like a hamster on a wheel.*

# Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



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

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**Ventline Sponsors:** ARAMARK, Dr. Jenny Murray, Arrow Wood Chiropractic; City of Cañon City; Colorado Jail Association; and Doing HIS Time Prison Ministry.

### BLOGS

<http://desertwaters.blogspot.com>  
<http://womenincorrections.blogspot.com>

### Thank You for Investing in Corrections Staff!

**The Corrections Ventline™**  
**1-866-YOU-VENT**  
**(866.968.8368)**  
[youvent@desertwaters.com](mailto:youvent@desertwaters.com)

## SONAR-I Trial Package

For a limited time, Mike Denhof, Ph.D., of SONAR-I for Corrections ([www.SONAR-I.com](http://www.SONAR-I.com), 800-991-1126), is graciously offering a trial package of SONAR-I Services consisting of a 250-pack of SONAR-I Answer Sheets and 10 re-usable SONAR-I Questionnaire leaflets—an \$850.00 value!—to facilities making a contribution of \$200 or more to DWCO.

The SONAR-I is a new and highly efficient offender assessment service. It works like this: Correctional staff provides offenders with a brief and group administrable questionnaire and answer sheet that can be completed in 20-25 minutes. Upon completion, the answer sheet is faxed to SONAR-I company (toll free) for processing. Within 24 hours, a one-page, concise Risk/Need Profile Report is emailed to the sender.

Reports consistently flag offenders who are at elevated risk for: Violent Behavior; Suicide; Mental Disorder and Substance Abuse; Symptom Faking; Criminal Thinking; Lying / Response Distortion; and Criminal Recidivism.

## Denver Post Article

*(Continued from page 1)*

*Thank you for spear heading awareness of a significant staff issue in the correctional industry. I'm encouraged.*

*I read an article today highlighting you and your organization for what you are accomplishing in the lives of correctional workers. I want to take this time to Thank You for what you are doing. I am a correctional officer with the Federal Bureau of Prisons. As you are aware, some correctional workers, whether county jails, state, or federal, need counseling to deal with what we deal with! Some of us just cannot cope or know how to "let it go" when we walk out of the gate at the end of our shift! I applaud you for what you are doing! I think that your approach to this highly forgotten segment of the criminal justice system is phenomenal! Thank you again for what you are doing!!*