

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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Stay Alert and on Your Toes

From <http://www.texasjustice.org/>. Written in response to the Texas inmates' escape and CO Susan Canfield's murder. Used with permission.

The convicts are the ones to blame. They made a conscious choice to again break the law. They weighed the costs and benefits of their crime and chose to take the risk. It is up to all of you to do your best to minimize those risks. Don't give them the opportunity to catch you in any weakness or stupidity. Be firm but fair in your dealings with convicts. When you escort one, walk behind them at arm's length. Don't let them follow you through a door. Don't even think of horse playing or becoming familiar with one. Your business is NOT their business. You are in the people business, so treat it like a business. Never think things are going so well that you can lay back and take it easy. Always stay alert and on your toes. You all be careful out there and stay safe. Above all, help each other when you see security breaking down.

From the Old Screw

Goodbye, My Friend

Well, it happened again. I've lost another sister who was in uniform and who died much too young. April was a young green Officer when I first met her. Even then she had medical problems, but they never stopped her for long. I've seen her come into work hurting so badly that sometimes she would come to my Unit and cry. She always tried so hard. I never saw her turn a job down.

She was a CO and I was a Sgt. But she was my friend and stayed that way, and even now she is still my friend. She was young enough to be my daughter, but we seemed to get along just fine. She always tried to be what a female Correctional Officer should be—proud of the job she was doing and always professional. Her husband must have

loved her very much because in all those years I never heard her say a word about him getting tired of her being sick. Her medical problems almost crippled her, but she kept going until it got so bad she couldn't go any more.



I lost contact with her when I went north for a promotion, but I would still ask mutual friends how she was doing. I was told she was going to Nursing School to become an RN.

She was only 41 years old. She completed nursing school as an RN, and had even been hired at a hospital when her time ran out. May I see you in Heaven, my friend April, where we can rejoice that there is no pain and that there are no cellblocks there.

IN MEMORIAM

Susan Canfield
TDCJ Officer
September 24, 2007
Fatally injured by inmates during an escape

IN MEMORIAM

Terry Schartz
September 15, 2007

IN MEMORIAM

Rex Schnupp
September 24, 2007

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

BETRAYED	2
ANOTHER ONE BITES	2
ANOTHER ONE BITES	3
PREVENTING DEPRESSION	3
KANSAS TRAININGS	3
WHAT IT IS LIKE	4
MANY THANKS	4

From CO Jane

Betrayed

Trust is a very big thing if you work in corrections. You have to be able to trust your co-workers. They are your first line of defense in any given situation. When one of them falls by getting involved with an inmate, other staff feels extremely betrayed. You treat the inmates with respect and fairness, but you do not become personally involved, as this can cause serious security breaches. People can get hurt or end up dead because of personal relationships with inmates.

I had worked in corrections for 15 years when one of my closest friends was walked out of the institution for having a relationship with an inmate. Never in my wildest imagination did I expect that she would allow this to happen. I trusted her completely. What was even worse for me was that I never saw the first sign that this could possibly be going on.

My initial reaction was terrible pain. It was like someone had taken a baseball bat and hit me as hard as they could in the stomach. It was a loss like I had never felt. After a while I got angry. I kept going over the "what if" questions in my mind. This person knew my secrets and I worried she had told this inmate things about me and my family.

I had never suspected anything, but my integrity was put on the line because of my association with this person. After four hours of interrogation by the Officer of the Inspector General, I felt like I had been dragged through the mud, not by them, but by her. Everything I did was now in doubt because of someone else's poor decision. My co-workers were watching me and making snide comments if they saw me talking to an inmate. Things that I had always done without a second thought became big

deals because I didn't want anyone to question my integrity.

I struggled with my emotions for months. I was angry at myself for not seeing it happening right in front of me. I was extremely angry at her for betraying me. Why, why, why, would she do something like this?

It was like someone close to me had died and I never got to say goodbye. I had been caught off guard, stunned, shocked, angered, saddened, scared, but I also missed our friendship.

Finally, through counseling I realized that my friend had betrayed me and the agency, but that she had betrayed herself much more. She violated the oath she had taken to protect and serve the public and the people who depended on her inside, including the inmates. She went against everything she had been trained to do, and she put the institution on the line. I understood that I had no control over the decisions my friend had made, only the way I reacted to those decisions. I was responsible for how I would move forward from this. I could stay angry and sad and end up only hurting myself, or I could forgive and let it go. I chose to forgive and move on. It was not an easy process, but oh, was it worth it!

I learned a valuable lesson from this experience. You cannot control your environment. People close to you are going to make decisions that affect you, but you don't have to let those decisions destroy you. I do not know why my friend did what she did. We are not friends today, but I don't harbor any resentment or anger toward her. When I was angry and bitter it only hurt me. I wouldn't wish this experience on anyone, but because of it I learned to face truth head-on and move beyond it.

From the Old Screw

Another One Bites The Dust

These are words to a song, but they can also apply to Correctional staff. It gets old hearing it apply to Staff, but it's a way of life. For those of you who don't understand what this means, it means that staff have compromised themselves with inmates again, costing them their job and their career. No, this does not mean only Female Staff, but all Staff. This problem exists in every state in the Union, and in prisons all over the world. Staff is warned time and time again in training and on the job to not turn to inmates for friendship, and also to watch out for

inmates playing games.

Most Staff are good people, but there are many factors that can take them down, if not dealt with. Low self-esteem, marriage problems, debts, loneliness, anger over not getting a promotion, resentment against fellow staff for taking excess time off, and a thousand and one other factors. NO, no one can be made to do anything they don't want to do, but words of kindness can hook you if they make you feel good. Thinking that only an inmate

(Continued on page 3)

Another One Bites The Dust

(Continued from page 2)

understands you and your emotions, that no one else cares about what you're going through with a sick wife or child, or the bills piling up, can get a staff member to cross the line with an inmate.

Wake up. The hard truth is that most inmates don't care about you or your family. All they are thinking about are the benefits you can give them—from sex (female and male) to contraband, to whatever. Always remember, **THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS INNOCENT CONTRABAND.** Anything you bring in is a nail in your career and job.

Also, some Staff think they can confide in an inmate and they will not tell anyone. Well, guess again, my friend. **ANYTHING** you tell an inmate is public knowledge in the inmate population or will be when he/she gets everything they can out of you.

I do not know how many female Staff have fallen for an inmate and lived happily ever after, but if you could find out, I think it would be less than a handful in the whole country. Everyone wants to be loved and wanted, but a male or female inmate is not the answer. I've known several female staff that have lost their jobs and careers. Not a one of them are still with the inmate that they gave up everything for.

I would love to never hear the words **ANOTHER ONE BITES THE DUST** again except in the song of the same name. I would love to never hear about another Staff being walked out the front gate, with a promising career shot down the drain. Will this happen? I'm afraid not, but it is a good wish and prayer. If you are feeling some of the above symptoms, talk to someone. **THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE WHO REALLY CARE ABOUT YOU AND YOURS!!!!!!!!!!!!**

Preventing Depression's Fallout In The Workplace

Caterina Spinaris Tudor, Ph.D., 2007

A recent year-long study funded by the National Institute of Mental Health of employees has shown that intervening aggressively in the case of depressed employees improves their odds of recovery and also saves the employers money through reduced absenteeism and turnover.

The study involved over 600 employees from 16 large U.S. companies. Of those identified as suffering with depression, half, the control group, were given the usual treatment—a letter suggesting they contact their physician or contact United Behavioral Health for referral to a mental health provider.

The other half, the intervention group, received phone calls during non-working hours from mental health case managers urging them to get treatment. After that they were called periodically to see how the treatment was going. Those who did not want to

go for help were offered telephone psychotherapy. (Telephone treatment is viewed as less stigmatizing and more convenient.) The intervention's cost was \$100 to \$400 per employee.

Results were impressive. Employees who received the intervention worked on average two weeks more than those who received the usual care, a savings of about \$1,800 per employee. By year's end, 93% of the intervention group was still employed vs. 88% of the control group—a savings in hiring and training costs. Equal percentages (40%) in both groups were given antidepressants. The intervention group (which was 60% more likely to get treated by mental health providers), was 40% more likely to recover from depression than the control group. This attests once again to the power of caring and to the healing effects of talking about one's emotional struggles.

Kansas Trainings

Caterina presented the training *Corrections: From Fatigue to Fulfillment* on October 1 at the El Dorado Correctional Facility, (20 staff attending), and on October 2 at the Kansas Correctional Association's Regional Conference (175 staff attending). Thank you Sandra Haus, Colene Fischli and many others for organizing these events!

Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



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

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<http://www.desertwaters.com/a-donations.htm>

MANY THANKS!

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Special thanks also go to: ALL who have helped make our first fundraising banquet a success through their donations and silent auction item contributions, and to our keynote speaker, Mr. Ari Zavaras, Executive Director, Colorado Dept. of Corrections

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BLOGS

<http://desertwaters.blogspot.com>
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**We thank you, Corrections Staff,
for the service you provide to our
communities & to our nation.**

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

Officer Vergel Bautista, RJC / Kent, WA

What It Is Like To Be A Corrections Officer

Corrections Officers work in a negative environment
There they stay until their retirement
They make sure the people you fear stay in their cell
The inmates scream and fight and tell us to go to hell
We use the power of speech to order the inmates about
We are fair, firm, and consistent, that is what gives us our clout
Without weapons we have murderers, rapists and robbers follow the jail rules
A cop out on the street, without weapons, would say that we are fools
We show no emotions because they will think we are weak
We are here to protect inmates, both strong and meek
We are grossly outnumbered one hundred to one
We are here for each other to make sure the job gets done
Everyday that we come to work we face the unknown
Could this be the day, the day that I don't go home
So we go to work hoping for the best
I pray for my brothers and sisters who have been laid to rest