

MCA TODAY



News from the Michigan Corrections Association Autumn 2008

MCA BOARD POSITIONS UP FOR GRABS

The Michigan Corrections Association (MCA) will hold elections in November for vacancies on the board of trustees. Vice-President, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Recording Secretary, and several trustee positions are open.

With nearly 400 current members and potential growth in membership to well over 1,000, you may have the chance to lead an organization that cares about the professional lives of all those in the field of corrections. Maybe you want to be a part of a great group of people who seek to make a positive impact on corrections. Or maybe you want to enhance your resume' by being on the board of a statewide professional association that represents over 20,000 corrections professionals in Michigan.



What ever your reason is, if you have are a current member, have two consecutive years of membership with MCA and want to be a part of a professional organization that seeks to expand its role at the state and local level, please consider running for one of the positions.

A printable nomination form for the election can be found in this publication and also on the web at www.micorrections.org. You can make the difference.

ACA SUMMER CONGRESS SUCCESSFUL ON MANY LEVELS

The 138th Annual Congress of Corrections was held in New Orleans August 8-13, 2008. It was a successful conference simply because a major hurricane didn't ruin the party. Unlike Hurricane Katrina three years ago, the only thing flooding the New Orleans streets this August was well-behaved crowds of corrections professionals from throughout the nation.

The American Correctional Association (ACA) chose to give back to New Orleans by holding it's summer conference in the "Big Easy." By all accounts it went very well and there was a big turnout in what most conference-goers saw as a good value for the risk.



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The conference offered programming for everyone. Business meetings, accreditation hearings, and the general assembly were all supporting events that makes ACA such a well-rounded and meaningful national association.

Of course, the exposition hall was a big hit with conference-goers as vendors demonstrated everything from medical supplies to prisoner transportation vehicles. Anything a correctional agency could possibly need was to order.

One of the most important aspects of any professional conference is the networking potential. Building professional relationships and new connections with correctional practitioners throughout the nation is invaluable to continued success in this business. New Orleans was a great venue to build and reinforce those connections.



Team members who use Sampson Park enjoy time at the "Make A Smile" donor recognition reception.

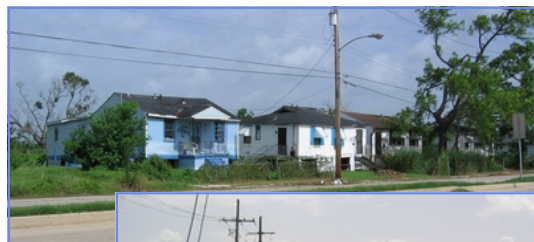
Finally, New Orleans offered the chance to see the fruits of our generosity, hard work, and dedication in the shape of a rehabilitated park in the 9th Ward, one of the hardest hit areas ravaged by Hurricane Katrina. Correctional agencies throughout the nation donated money, labor, and resources to build three playgrounds in Mississippi and Louisiana. Seeing the 9th Ward's Sampson Park totally rebuilt with new playground equipment, swings, a shelter, and new ball field

gave all who visited a renewed sense of pride in our role as society's gate keepers. Most corrections professionals influence the lives of adult felons who many see as beyond rehabilitation. The "Make A Smile" campaign that built these playgrounds was a chance for corrections professionals to reach into society and impact the lives of children and adults alike on a more personal basis.



Finally, a visit to Bourbon Street and the French Quarter provided a brief respite from the daily pressures faced by so many corrections professionals, in what is typically a very rewarding but thankless job. It also reinforced the sense of ethical values and professionalism embraced by so many who choose this career.

New Orleans was a gracious host to this event, the grandest on ACA's annual calendar. Everyone who attended the conference felt the collective "thank you" from New Orleans, a city still in recovery and still very dependent on conferences like this one for their continued survival.





ACHIEVE STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY WITH VOCATIONAL DIVERSITY

BY JOSEPH BOUCHARD

Here is a paradox: We are very different, yet we are alike. Our criminal justice mosaic consists of much more than the traditional 3 C's of "cops, courts, and corrections." To further appreciate the depth and scope of our collective works, one has to further sub-divide.

The corrections profession, for example, consists of much more than officers in a prison. We also have to recognize the other jobs. Some of them are juvenile justice, parole, research, development, academia, training, probation.

Yet, as we announce our diverse niches, are we going too far? When should we cease in sub dividing? Can we realistically act in unison when we perform so many different functions?

The unifying factor of our rich diversity lies in our common goals. All segments of the criminal justice system have a primary shared goal: Public safety. That is a common element in all of our mission statements. Each of our specialties leads us on a metaphorically different road. But, to alter an ancient phrase, "All roads lead to public safety." While we all tread different paths, we are directed towards the same destination.

And though we are on different roads, it does not mean that we cannot communicate. When we do that, through coordination we can achieve the common goal of efficiency. As with public safety, the concept of efficiency for the taxpayer is a common element in our mission statements.

Here are some other ways that all of our diverse specialties in the criminal justice system can become united:

- Balance - Don't abandon your specialty. It is important to maintain ties to your criminal justice sub-profession. But, that is a matter of balance. You should continue to work both sides of the hyphen. For example, I am employed as a corrections – librarian. As a matter of professional identity, I keep in touch with people and issues connected with the larger library world. But I also promote the fact to my non-corrections colleagues that I perform library services in a prison.
- The Criminal Justice perspective - Anyone can work both sides of the professional hyphen, but that is not a reason to ignore the rest of the criminal justice system.





You can maintain your identity with your part of the criminal justice troika and still have camaraderie with all others. For example, every court clerk has a vocational fellowship with all wardens, FBI agents, probation officers, police chiefs, and corrections teacher. There is an unbelievable variety of roles under the criminal justice umbrella.

- Inclusion – Criminal justice associations need to be more inclusive. For example, membership in the Michigan Corrections Association is not strictly reserved for those employed with the Michigan Department of Corrections. Anyone with an interest in criminal justice is welcome to join. This includes those from law enforcement, the judicial system, and members of the public. This sort of inclusion is meant to broaden the base of our diverse strength.
- Perspective – Everything in our field is connected. Offenders stop at many varied stations, but are affected by all of us. Though some would argue that our vocational links are tenuous, I contend that they are links, never the less. We are all part of a larger system.
- Professional literature – We are truly the experts of our jobs. There are many outside criminal justice who write about our work experiences. But we have a unique perspective given to us by on the line experience. Literature that we produce comes from living the reality and binds us closer.

It is hard to deny our connection. Our common goals of public safety and work-

ing efficiently for the tax payer are glues that bind all diverse parts of the criminal justice system. We have many specialties. But our ultimate destination is the same.

About the Author – Joe Bouchard is a Librarian at Baraga Maximum Correctional Facility within the Michigan Department of Corrections. He is also a member of the Board of Experts for *The Corrections Professional* and an instructor of Corrections for Gogebic Community College and Editor of *The Correctional Trainer*. You can reach him at (906) 353-7070 ext 1321 or bouchard@up.net.

These are the opinions of Joe Bouchard, a Librarian employed with the Michigan Department of Corrections. These are not necessarily the opinions of the Department. The MDOC is not responsible for the content or accuracy.

MDOC DIRECTOR ELECTED ACA VICE-PRESIDENT

Michigan Department of Corrections Director Patricia L. Caruso has been elected to the position of Vice-President of the American Correctional Association (ACA). Caruso beat out Evelyn Ridley-Turner of Indiana, who is the current Treasurer of ACA.

The addition of Caruso to ACA's executive board will benefit Michigan and MCA. Her experience at the state level, coupled with her national recognition and connections will shine a national light on Michigan issues. MCA extends our congratulations to Director Caruso and we look forward to working closely with her on Michigan initiatives.





RUST AND DECAY LEAD TO CRITICAL FAILURES

By
John C. Cordell

When rust and decay creep into infrastructure, it fails. The I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis, Minnesota is a testament to that. A faulty design, improper maintenance and failure to repair or replace the bridge caused



it to collapse into the Mississippi River. As a result, people died, river traffic came to a standstill, commuters were inconvenienced, and lawsuits were filed.

Other things happened as a result of the collapse. Some tough lessons were learned. Our reactionary bureaucracies stepped up and inspected bridges throughout the nation. There was a thorough investigation and fault was determined. We rebuilt the bridge better than ever. Unfortunately it took death and catastrophic failure to learn the lesson.

So, what happens when rust and decay creep into an organization? It's a simple answer - catastrophic failure occurs.

The Michigan Corrections Association is like that I-35W bridge. It's still there. It hasn't yet collapsed into the river. But each day that competent, bright, moti-

vated professionals neglect our MCA bridge more cracks appear until one day it collapses.

I was once one of neglectful, sitting on the sidelines, not willing to inspect the bridge, not willing to make repairs. Then one day, someone came to me and said, "We need you to help." It was up to me to become a bridge inspector, it was my turn to apply some repairs, to help reinforce the bridge. It was my choice to join with the other people who were working hard to make sure the bridge didn't collapse.

For the past two years I have been vice-president of MCA. During that time we have been able to do some fun things. We have developed a great new website (www.micorrections.org), we have delivered conferences on relevant issues in corrections, and we have maintained stable membership numbers.

But MCA can do much more. Bigger and better conferences, expanded influence at the local and state level, and higher membership enrollment are within our grasp. A better Michigan Corrections Association starts with you. You can help recruit new people, bring ideas to the table, run for the executive board, and provide the tools and skills necessary to strengthen our MCA bridge so that it will never collapse.

Together as corrections professionals, we can walk across that bridge toward a better tomorrow. It begins today, and it begins with you!





MCA BOARD EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTION NOMINATION FORM

If you are interested in running for a vacant position with MCA, please complete the information below and submit it along with a professional bio to the address below. There is a version of the nomination form on the website as well.

I, _____ am requesting to be considered for the position of _____ on the Board of Trustees with the Michigan Corrections Association. I have two years of continuous service with MCA and I am a member in good standing. I have attached a bio that may be reprinted on the election ballot in order to help voters make a more informed decision.

My contact information is below:

Name: _____

E-mail: _____

Ph.: _____

Cell: _____

Signature

Date

Completed nominations along with professional bio shall be postmarked by **October 15, 2008** and addressed to:



Michigan Corrections Association
P.O. Box 12021
Lansing, MI 48901-2021





IS PRISONER RE-ENTRY JUST ANOTHER FLAVOR OF THE WEEK?

Prisoner Re-entry is the latest way to change corrections, but is it a long-lasting change, or another her today, gone tomorrow program?

In Michigan, and in many other states throughout the country, it is quickly becoming the new way of doing business. Ohio, Kansas, Missouri, Oregon and other states are embracing re-entry as a policy that cannot be discarded. Effective re-entry policy is seen as a way to reduce prison populations, control spending, and create better citizens of the prisoners who return to their communities.



In Michigan, the final phases for complete implementation are taking shape, and re-entry will become the way of doing business by 2011. It also has bi-partisan support, so a change in administrations will likely not result in a change in this fresh correctional policy.

The results of re-entry could have a ripple effect throughout communities, as spending reductions in corrections are funneled into other community and educational programming. There is still a long way to go in a country that incarcerates people at a higher rate than any other industrialized nation. Michigan will be one of the pioneers in this reform movement - a culture change, that for so many, can't come soon enough.

MICHIGAN CORRECTIONS ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE BOARD

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