

MCA TODAY

News from the Michigan Corrections Association
August 2007



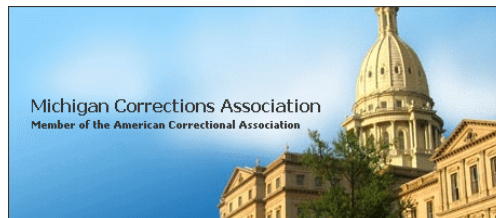
MCA GOLF OUTING CANCELLED

This year's golf outing is cancelled as we reorganize and shift delivery of this great event. MCA wishes to thank everyone who helped out and supported the event including Amy Hasbrouck, Mike Curley and Copper Ridge Golf Club. Look for a bigger and better golf outing next year!! If you have suggestions about the event, or want to help organize next year's outing, please contact Past President Rich Johnson at rich.johnson@micorrections.org.



WWW.MICORRECTIONS.ORG IS HERE!!

MCA has launched our new website. With the help of Stephen Bass and Micah Designs, MCA has a new site dedicated to Michigan's correctional professionals. The site has links to our newsletters, photos, events and happenings, and other correctional organizations. The Board of Trustees page allows you to send e-mail directly to board members. While creating the new website, MCA launched a new toll-free phone number for members and the public: 1-888-MCA-MICH or 1-888-622-6424.



Please take a minute to explore the new site and if you aren't a member yet, there is a link to join MCA and ACA. Be sure to save www.micorrections.org as one of your favorites and share it with colleagues who may be interested in MCA.

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BE THE PROFESSIONAL WITHIN YOUR PROFESSION WITH ACA!

Become a Certified Corrections Professional at the following conferences:

- ACA Summer Congress - Kansas City, MO: August 11, 2007 - 7:30 a.m.
- Correctional Security Conference - Cincinnati, OH: October 3, 2007 - 1:00 p.m.
- Indiana Correctional Association Conference - Indianapolis, IN: October 11, 2007 - 8:00 a.m.

Pre-registration for these examinations is required. ACA's Certification Program is designed to increase the public's awareness of corrections as a profession and advance the overall knowledge of practitioners in the field. Certified Corrections



Professionals are recognized by their peers as having achieved the highest level of professionalism in their areas of corrections.

For examination registration, contact Dr. Bob Levinson: BobL@aca.org or call 1-800-222-5646, ext. 0176. For additional information, please visit the ACA website at

www.aca.org/certification.

GUARDS? I THINK NOT!!

Corrections professionals rely on journalists to credibly and accurately inform the public about their field. They are often disappointed and frustrated by inaccurate depictions of corrections by the news media. A disturbing example is the continued use of the word "guard" to refer to custodial or security personnel. More than 20 years ago, the American Correctional Association (ACA) decided to eliminate the word "guard" and other offensive and outdated terms from its publications, advertisements, announcements, communications and exhibits. The ACA condemns use of the word because it implies the job is inherently passive and demands nothing more than watching locked-up inmates. Nothing could be further from the truth.



The media should accept and use the terms "correctional officer" or "corrections officer" when referring to personnel performing security functions in correctional settings. These terms embody the diverse skills officers employ each day -- communication skills, cultural awareness, first aid, suicide prevention, emergency response preparedness, program and service delivery and the proper use of force.

The correctional officers' role is to ensure that offenders complete their sentences in a way that sufficiently addresses the wide range of problems they often bring with them, while maintaining corrections' paramount duty -- public safety. While custody and control is a major aspect of their role, correctional officers' duties also include support of habilitative or rehabilitative programs that require advanced or specialized training.



The news media have cast themselves in the role of keepers of the truth and exposers of wrongdoing. Responsible journalists should show their professionalism by respecting corrections officers. Further, if the media would learn about corrections, they too would understand the term "guard" does not apply.

It is unjustified to embrace the rationale, as some journalists have suggested, that "guard" can be used interchangeably with "correctional officer" because it is more familiar to the public or has fewer letters. The word no longer fits. Times

have changed, the practice of corrections has changed, and the media should move on from using terminology that has been out of place for decades.

JAMES A. GONDLES JR

Executive Director
American Correctional Association

SEEKING BOARD MEMBERS



If you have been an MCA member in good standing for two years and you want to be a part of the exciting changes that are happening in MCA, please join our board of trustees. We currently have two trustee positions and the financial secretary position open. Please contact MCA if you are a go-getter who can help make MCA better!

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CHANGING YOU

By John Cordell

About the Author: John Cordell is a curriculum development specialist for the Michigan Department of Corrections and the current Vice President of MCA. These concepts have been adapted from a variety of sources and are not the intellectual property of the author. They are the sole opinions of the author and no group or organization affiliated with the author.

Did you ever get out of bed and feel that life wasn't going in the right direction? Did you feel like you were no longer in control of your own life? Maybe you felt like you wanted to do more, but didn't know where to start. Or you didn't have much confidence in yourself. If you want to make a difference in your life, try embracing these concepts.

LOVE YOURSELF FIRST

Loving yourself first is about understanding internal love and embracing who you are in every aspect of your own life. Only when you do that can you start to share the richness of what love is. While there are times when love is a feeling or emotion, love is more than that. It's a choice in life to give all of you to another without hesitation in mind or body. Only when you know and love yourself, are you able to share love completely with others.



IT'S NOT WHAT YOU HAVE, IT'S WHAT YOU GIVE

The saying "He who dies with the most toys, wins", does not apply here. You are still dead. And how does having more toys than the neighbor positively affect others in a meaningful way?



I think this is one of the most powerful statements on earth. Giving is such an all-encompassing concept that it really permeates all that you are and all that you do. We give to others all the time in many different ways. Simple things like holding doors or helping someone who needs a few extra pennies at the checkout lane can brighten someone's day. Big things are more life-altering or even life sustaining. Breastfeeding your children has life-long benefits. Donating a kidney or bone marrow to a family member or someone you have never met who is a donor match is beyond comprehension for many of us. Challenging your children to understand the concepts discussed here is life-altering.

When you give of yourself to others, it FEELS good. You are a better person for doing it. Think how it makes you feel when someone goes out of their way to help you. Giving, rather than having, will add years to your life.

IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU, IT'S ABOUT THEM

This means that you put others first in most aspects of your life. It's living selflessly rather than selfishly. When you make a decision, how will it impact them? Who is "them"? "Them" is anyone who may be impacted by your actions, speech, or decisions. It's another concept closely related to giving, but linked to the decision making process of putting others first. How can you serve those around you in the best way possible? It's enriching behavior.



THINKING CONTROLS BEHAVIOR

I like to call this "Choice Living". We get to choose how we live, what we do, how we act, and interact with ourselves, and others. It's another simple, but powerful



concept. THINKING CONTROLS BEHAVIOR. You think then act. We all know that many actions are subconscious, especially our speech. Some people have foot-in-mouth disease. It's that affliction that causes us to insert our foot deeply into our mouth after we have said something dumb (truthful maybe, but still dumb). Overcoming the disease is easy. You think before you speak. "How fascinating!!" In order to change your behavior, you must identify the thinking that controls the changeable behavior, see the thinking errors, and then practice thinking a new alternative that is more appealing than what you were thinking. Then you act differently.

Example: I get mad at the kids when they interrupt me on the computer. Then I act on that anger by yelling. It makes no sense. My thoughts are "I want to get computer time in. You are interrupting me. I will punish you for making it so I can't get what I want." It's ridiculous! But because I am driven to get what I want, I am not making a conscious thought about what better behavior might be. So how do I overcome it? I review and identify the behavior so I am aware of my subconscious choices. I internalize that it's not right and accept it as so. Then I work on changing it. New thinking might be, "My children want and need my attention more than I need to be on the computer. I am going to serve them; after all, it's not about me, it's about them." I will meet their needs, and feel good because they appreciated me helping and being a good dad who pays attention to them." They feel good, and I feel good. Wow.

But for it to work, the new thinking has to replace the old. We must continue to work and reinforce that the “right” choice brings a better result than the old one. Then the new thinking becomes subconscious and we are left in a better situation, engaging in better behaviors.

FINAL THOUGHT

Everyday, I try to embrace these concepts. And some days I fail. Other days I get it right; and on those days I feel like I could lift the world out of the sky. But from experience, I know that living these concepts is NOT easy. It takes time, practice, patience, and energy to get it right, even most of the time. And they aren't guaranteed to always work, because life, by its very nature is unpredictable. But, I also know from experience that embracing these concepts, learning them, and applying them to all aspects of your life will change you.

PRISONS NEAR BOILING POINT

Michigan's prison system and the prisoners inside it are working through a series of difficult changes. Tight budgets, Michigan's prisoner re-entry initiative, increasing beds, and reducing the expenses of both health care and food service are starting to take their toll on employees and prisoners. Proposed changes in sentencing laws have local sheriffs and law enforcement proponents up in arms. They suggest being viewed as a state that is lax on criminal enforcement could have an effect on tourism, business, and criminal activity within our borders. At stake is Michigan's future.

MCA continues to be in support of state and local initiatives that make Michigan a safer place to live, while giving all of our citizens a sense of safety and a chance to succeed in society. At this point, many would agree that all options are on the table. With a prison population at over 50,000 and a proposed state level budget of \$2 billion dollars, exercising due care and diligence in solving the crisis is paramount. Reducing our state's incarceration rate, while keeping Michigan's citizens safe is a key component to reducing cost. But we need to ensure that the most dangerous criminals are behind bars, where they belong.

MCA is imploring all involved parties to work together in unity to help solve the daunting issues facing corrections in this state. No single political party, no single person, no single entity will solve this problem alone. It must be done together. And it must be done soon. MCA urges its members to actively participate in finding solutions. Share them with their legislator, administrators, supervisors, and peers. MCA asks those legislators, administrators and supervisors to listen with open ears.

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NOTES:

If you have anything that you would like to see in the *MCA Today*, please e-mail John Cordell at john.cordell@micorrections.org. Thanks to TJF Printing and everyone who assisted with the publication and content of the August 2007 edition.

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