

MCA TODAY



News from the Michigan Corrections Association Spring 2009

Welcome to MCA Today's Teamwork Issue

Ah, teamwork!

When it works well, it is a beautiful thing. It is manifested in so many forms: a double play in baseball, a wise division of labor in a factory, a plan between siblings to canvass the neighborhood on Halloween. One could even consider a job interview as teamwork between parties to exchange information. Truly, examples of teamwork are everywhere.

In corrections, our safety depends on cooperation between colleagues and agencies. Almost all corrections agencies have the concept of safety in their mission statement. Quite simply, Teamwork = Safety

MCA, as a corrections association, strives to enhance safety at various workplaces through networking, distribution of information, and through informative conferences. Those are three examples of teamwork, the pooling of efforts and resources for a common goal.

Inside this issue, there are four additional illustrations of teamwork.

- ◆ The ACA conference is a large scale collaboration of professionals, sharing ideas and experiences;
- ◆ The contraband control article points out that safety is enhanced for all with the collaborative effort of removing bootleg from the worksite;
- ◆ Rachel Johnson's action demonstrate a team leader in the community;
- ◆ Tony Owen's article points to our history, a cohesive force to study and appreciate in any profession.

With this, I am respectfully requesting assistance of the Michigan Corrections Association membership for the MCA team. MCA Today would benefit through submission of articles from different areas of our association. New perspectives are welcome. Please add to the strength of MCA by sending news and articles to Joe Bouchard at bouchard@up.net.

Joe Bouchard,

MCA Today Editor



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News from the Michigan Corrections Association



ACA WINTER CONFERENCE

The 139th Annual Conference of Corrections was held in Kissimmee, Florida in January. What was a cold snap for some in Central Florida was a nice weather break for others. Two Michigan Corrections Professionals represented MCA .

Honor Guard

The Michigan Department of Corrections Honor Guard, featuring John Cordell, delivered a seminar at this ACA's Winter conference in Florida. The unit discussed a variety of topics related to the formation and support of a correctional honor guard unit.



While the crowd was not as big as they would have liked, those in attendance took away a significant amount of information they could apply within their agencies. The seminar was held on Saturday and had a foreign flavor as far as attendees. Puerto Rico and Costa Rica were both represented, providing an interesting dynamic to the group. The Honor Guard was proud to represent the Department, MCA and ACA on this national stage.

Wake up and Smell the Contraband

Joe Bouchard from the Baraga Facility presented a program on detecting and controlling contraband. He covered many topics including contraband definitions, the contraband control process, various search strategies, and his 25 laws of con-

traband.

This presentation on battling bootleg and enhancing safety was very well attended.



Joe Bouchard leads a "Wake Up and Smell the Contraband" seminar at the ACA Winter Conference in Orlando, FL.

ACA Congress of Correction Summer 2009

The American Correctional Association will hold it's annual summer conference in Nashville, Tennessee this year August 8-12 at the Opryland Gaylord Resort. According to MapQuest, it's only 537 miles - an 8 hour and 20 minute trip from Lansing, MI. Plan on attending the summer conference in Nashville this year. For more information go to www.aca.org.



THE CONTRABAND SEARCH: ART OR SCIENCE

BY JOE BOUCHARD

Whenever a contraband item is removed from a corrections setting, security will be enhanced. This is true whether a weapon or a simple betting slip is taken out of circulation. Of course, the weapon is a more obvious threat than the betting slip. However, small things can be traced to larger, seriously dangerous enterprises. It remains that all contraband has the potential to present peril to staff and prisoners.

Without question, security is the paramount goal of corrections. This is true regardless of the size or location of the worksite. From the smallest local lockup in Alaska to the largest maximum security facility in Florida, contraband's ubiquity remains a dangerous truth.

The primacy of security is reflected in so many agencies. One can execute a random search of mission statements in our profession and discover the presence of the words "safety" and "security". For example, one Midwestern corrections agency with which I am familiar lists its goal as an agent of safety for staff, offenders, and the public.

If someone were to ask a large number of staff how to best eliminate contraband, there would be a variety of answers. Tactics and styles are quite individual. However, from that broad store of suggestions, one could compose a fairly good check list. It is sim-



ply up to the discretion of each practitioner to adapt the list to their particular needs. It is a matter of pragmatism.

Then there arises a philosophical question. Is contraband control an art or a science? Let's see what one can learn for both extremes.

Contraband control is an art. Ask any health care professional, bartender, or corrections staff about intuition. A large number of each will readily acknowledge that they have experienced intuition. This can come in the form of an "X Factor", the feeling that something is not really as it should be. There are many in the corrections profession that seem to know that something significant will happen within the facility, even though there are no obvious indications. This sixth sense can also be applied to contraband finds. Intuitive staff seem to know exactly where to search and are often successful.

Contraband control artists are also adept at feeling the vibe of the institution and the inmate population. The hunches that they act on should not be dismissed. Overlooked suggestions can lead to disenfranchisement of a valuable resource. Don't reject the intuitive.

Those who consider the approach of the contraband control artist as flawed tend to label intuition as pattern analysis, a keen sense of personal dynamics, astute observation, and solid corrections experience. Whatever the full truth, contraband control artists enhance safety for all, in-

cluding the skeptical scientist.

Contraband control is a science. To the contraband control scientist, there is no such thing as luck. Agents of fortune do not exist in their world. Successful contraband control is predicated on a structured and thorough search.

At their purest, contraband control scientists are methodical practitioners who employ a process. Some of the stations on the contraband control process are shared observations, vigilance, the search (both covert and overt), and documentation. The successful contraband control scientist knows the lay of the land and is realistic about the elusive nature of the goal. They will continually (and methodically) tweak their system in order to uncover more bootleg.

The contraband control artist may consider the scientist as a cold technician who refuses to listen to the informed inner voice. Never the less, contraband found by the scientist is a safety win for all, including a dismissive artist.

So, who is more valuable? Is it the artist or the scientist? As with all apples and oranges questions, no single answer is right all of the time. Scientists are capable of failure and intuition will not always be on target.

Therefore, it is easy to conclude that both methods have their merit. It is more im-

portant to recognize the personality types and any feelings attached to the methods. These two search philosophies can coexist. Optimally, they should compliment one another.

Sometimes, we are so fixed on the means that the ends are lost. The very worthy goal of security for all is more important than the tactics of the scientist or the intuition of the artist. Whatever the search philosophy, it is the public, offenders, and staff who ultimately benefit from the removal of contraband from our facilities.

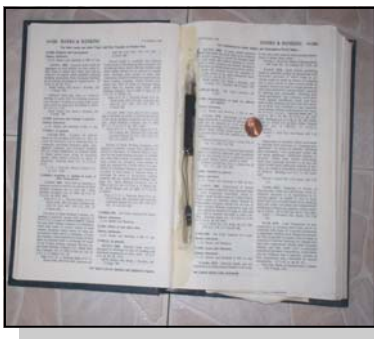
About the Author – MCA Board Member Joe Bouchard is a Librarian at Baraga Maximum Correctional Facility within the Michigan Department of Corrections. He is also a member of the Board of Experts for The Corrections Professional and an instructor of Corrections and Psychology for Gogebic Community College. Bouchard, MCA Today's Editor, also serves as the Editor of The Correctional Trainer. You can reach him at (906) 353-7070 ext 1321.

MCA MEMBER MAKES NATIONAL NEWS

According to a report in the Jackson Citizen Patriot by Danielle Quisenberry on Wednesday, February 11, 2009, a Jackson, MI woman was selected to serve on national coalition to stop teen dating abuse. This is none other than Michigan Department of Corrections employee, Rachel Johnson. Here is an excerpt from that article:

To help with the effort the two companies picked from hundreds of applicants, who submitted essays, at least two people from every state to serve as action leaders.

Leaders are to encourage people to join the coalition and sign an online petition





supporting dating abuse education and contact local schools to encourage them to teach a recommended curriculum. The curriculum addresses the scope of the problem, ways to identify abuse and respond to it, and resources for assistance.

Johnson, who acts as a prosecutor for the state at parole revocation hearings, found out about the contest by reading REDBOOK at the dentist office late last year and decided she wanted to be a part of it.

"It is not so much about what I do, but also about what I've experienced as a woman and as a mother," said Johnson, who is married with three sons, aged 17, 8 and 2, and a 14-year-old stepson.

You can learn more about this by accessing this website: http://www.mlive.com/news/jackson/index.ssf/2009/02/jackson_woman_selected_to_serv.html.

VIOLENCE AND PUNISHMENT: THEN AND NOW

BY TONY OWEN

Society has always had the challenge of dealing with violence.

The world is a violent place to live in. History is littered with examples of humanity's cruelty upon itself. From one of the earliest records of history, the Bible, one can read about the murder of Abel by Cain. Down through time come more stories and examples of slavery, rape, murder, and genocide. Recent historical examples include Hitler's attack on the Jews and the Genocide of the Serbs in Bosnia. In the United States, society has been struggling with assisted suicide, serial killers, and the death penalty.

With the Internet, predators take advantage of and find victims to in a whole new world. Recent news reports expose how pedophiles are finding victims through the chat rooms on the Internet. They meet their prey there and smoothly set up meetings where they eventually claim their Victim.

Violence is all around. In today's society all one has to do is turn on the TV and see the latest murder story. For example, in the movie "True Lies", there are more than 94 scenes of murder, mayhem, and destruction. Included in this movie is an atomic bomb detonation.

In today's newspapers one can read about the latest crime complete with gory details. In one quick scan through any major news periodical, and there may be found an article about the new "super bullet" which pierces body armor. The sole purpose of this bullet is to kill police and others who are being protected by this armor.



Through the ages, society has tried to deal with these acts of violence. There eventually became coded laws and rules to help everyone know what is not allowed. Starting with the Code of Hammurabi, continuing through the Roman Em-





pire, into the Feudal System of Europe, to the present day laws and the U.S. Constitution, society has tried to create a system of justice and just punishment.

An eye-for-an-eye was the accepted norm of punishment. If one stole an apple, one was be-headed. If the apple belonged to the king, the thief was sold into slavery or executed. Some still believe in this type of justice today. Others call it revenge.

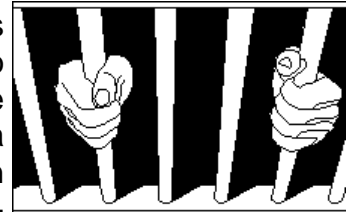
The figure of a judge was created by society from its need for an objective decision maker. These were the interpreters and arbitrators of the law. Many times, it was the ruling regent who sat in judgment. They would interpret the law and dispense justice. All societies have gone about this justice process in their own way. Religion is one factor that has had a major impact in how a particular society defines what its justice is.

All societies judged and dispensed justice according to their religious and societal values. Many believe that executing someone, proved little in deterring crime. The governing bodies also found execution was starting to be considered as too harsh a punishment by the people. Instead of execution, transgressors would now be banished from society. The rise of penal colonies came with society's use of banishment as a punishment.

There has always been some form of dungeon or tower to isolate offenders. These were also referred to as debtors prisons, work houses, the king's mines

and other names to numerous to cite. These proved to be a costly drain on the king's treasury.

As the prisons became overcrowded, society turned even more to banishment as a form of punishment.



Australia was started as a penal colony. The United States received its share of lawbreakers, and refugees, when it was a colony of Great Britain. Even today, examples can be found of banishment being used as a form of relieving overcrowding. The Cuban "boat lift" involved numerous criminals being sent to the United States by Cuba's government to relieve their prison overcrowding.

Eventually, even banishment to the colonies became an unacceptable way of punishing criminals. Another method of punishment had to be found. Today when society banishes someone they send that person to a prison.

Prisons are a somewhat recent creation of society. Only within the last couple of centuries has the modern prison been used as a viable option to punish criminals. The current definition of a prison states it is;

"A facility run for the specific purpose of maintaining convicted offenders away from society..."

This part of the definition clearly speaks of banishment. The definition continues;





"...Until such time as they are released back into society."

What is found in this concept is that the prison, by maintaining these offenders, is protecting society from their further acts of violence and lawbreaking. Yet, they are expected to release them back to society someday.

In each of our solutions to crime are new challenges for society. The fact remains that our reactions to violence is always evolving.

About the Author – MCA Board member Tony Owen is a retired Corrections manager after having worked in Indiana and Michigan departments of corrections for over 25 years. In his career he has worked in various levels of security from correction center to Level VI. Currently he is serving as the membership chairperson for the Michigan Corrections Association and teaches corrections on ground and online at the west Michigan campus of the University of Phoenix. He can be reached by e mail at MCAtowen@charter.net.

NOTES

The Michigan Corrections Association is proud to support local, state and national recognition of corrections professionals who excel in our field of endeavor. MCA would like to recognize Michigan Department of Corrections Officer Donna Houtz of the Lakeland Correctional Facility for being selected as the MDOC's 2009 Officer of the Year. MCA is extending the invitation of a 1-year MCA/ACA professional membership to Officer Houtz and the remaining four finalists for this distinguished honor. If you know a corrections professional who has received recognition for a job well done, please let us know at bouchard@up.net.

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