

MCA TODAY



**News from the Michigan Corrections Association
Spring 2008**

WELCOME TO THE MCA LEADERSHIP ISSUE

Leaders are important in every human interaction. And in all segments of corrections, they are absolutely crucial. With the safety of prisoners, staff, and the public at stake, corrections leaders are a vital commodity.

What is the profile of a leader? The answer may be a bit elusive because leaders run the gamut. The definition rests on no particular classification, background, age, or work location. Styles will vary. Some will lead through oration while others use a quiet presence.

As you read through this issue of MCA Today, please consider the importance of leaders. Enjoy the Leadership Issue.

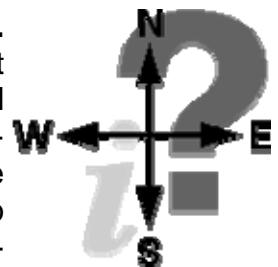
-Joe Bouchard
Guest Editor

CORRECTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Every leader in corrections will develop a personal style, but I believe that there are at least four traits shared by most good leaders:

The first is that they will be able to develop and communicate a vision.

The development of that vision requires a realistic assessment of the current state of affairs locally as well as knowledge of the best practices in the field generally. Concerns most relevant to the vision will be given the most attention. Then that vision must be communicated so that staff will want to engage in its pursuit. An excellent leader will seek input – the staff who are closest to daily operations will have the best idea about how to make the vision a reality. Listening more than talking is a great leadership skill. A good leader will be available to staff at all levels. While an open door policy and e-mail are useful mechanisms here, frequent forays from the office are essential to alert the leader to issues that could de-



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velop into real problems if not addressed early. Sometimes called “Management While Walking Around,” this also is an excellent way for correctional administrators to take the temperature of their organization. Do staff freely offer suggestions? Are they excited about proposed improvements? How can you, as the leader, make transitions easier for them?

Since implementing a vision necessarily involves change, effective leaders are change agents. And since most line staff and middle managers feel most comfortable with “the way we’ve always done it,” the challenge here is how to preserve a sense of safety while moving forward. The best way to do this is to prepare the ground rather than rush blindly ahead. Unless an improvement must be acted on quickly, it will best be implemented only after all involved have a chance to know what is to happen, offer suggestions and critique, and revisit the plan prior to action. Evaluating how the change has actually worked after a while is a good idea, too. Often in the press of business that final step is forgotten.



The second common trait is curiosity. The leader is a learner. She or he asks questions and seeks new information, not only about internal operations, but about what is going on in the rest of the world. This helps identify issues and trends that will impact operations and to identify future partners. Increasingly, correctional lead-

ers look outside their organizations for ideas and support.

The third trait is the ability to understand systems. Few actions have only one consequence, and the skilled leader will consider all the possible outcomes and seek input from others who may be impacted, within and without the organization, before moving forward. It is important to understand how each part of the operation meshes with the overall goals and to seek ways to improve contributions.

The final trait is that the leader must walk the talk. He or she cannot claim to support diversity while promoting only people who look and think like him or her. Staff can be held accountable for ethical behavior only if the leader behaves ethically. If teamwork is encouraged, the leader cannot grab credit for others’ efforts.

One may survive as a manager lacking some of these qualities, but true leadership requires all of them. The work of corrections gets done by people, primarily, and a great leader will find ways to meld the skills and talents staff to best serve offenders and the public.

**WWW.MICORRECTIONS.ORG
IS HERE!**

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.



HELP NAAWS MAKE A SMILE

Over two years ago, one of the worst natural disaster ever experienced by this country smashed into the gulf coast of the United States. Hurricane Katrina cut a wide path of destruction, hitting hardest in Mississippi and Louisiana. In the aftermath, many would say “what can we do?”

NAAWS (The North American Association of Wardens & Superintendents) in partnership with CPO is organizing a project called “Make A Smile”. The goal is to go into Louisiana and Mississippi to build playgrounds for children of those families who were so horribly affected.



The first project will begin in the first week of May. It is Make a Smile's intent to construct playgrounds and picnic shelters at two sites. One in the 9th Ward in New Orleans and another will be in the town of Bogalusa, a few miles from Rayburn Correctional Facility.

All donations should be made out to “Make A Smile”(NAAWS) and sent to NAAWS, P. O. Box 11037, Albany, NY 12211-0037. If you can volunteer your labor, please email zukey5@aol.com. Please state what construction skills you have. Please do what you can. For more information, please visit www.naaws.corrections.com

CAMA CONFERENCE COMING TO MICHIGAN

The 21st annual training conference of the Correctional Accreditation Managers' Association will be held in historic Mackinac Island, Michigan. The conference will be held at the [Mission Point Resort](#). Panel Hearings will be held May 30 and 31, 2008. The conference will be May 31 – June 3. Michigan's “Building Bridges” CAMA conference invites you to network with other professionals to share ideas and problem-solving techniques. For more information, go to:



<http://cama.corrections.com/Seminars.htm>

DRIVING IN A SNOW STORM: A LOOK AT LEADERSHIP

By Joe Bouchard

Let's look back at a season just past. Sub zero temperatures...Blinding snow squalls...Icy roads...Crippling fear of collision...

As winter recedes in Michigan, many of us remember the hazardous conditions. It was necessary for some to venture out into blizzards. We had no choice but to brave the elements in order to reach our destinations.

As we consider our winter driving habits, there is also another lesson to be found. Driving in a snow storm is an example of the qualities and skills necessary in effective leadership. So, leave your comfort behind and imagine the challenges of arriving safe and sound while relentless northern gales chill our State.

Visibility - One major concern when driving in the snow is visibility. It is crucial for the driver to see through the blizzard and locate the road, other motorists, and all hazards. Leaders in all walks of life need this vision, as well. Clearly, we are less effective leaders when we do not have a plain view of where we are going. The ultimate destination is important. However, a hazard on the way to the end could delay or derail the entire trip. It is up to the leader to anticipate such impediments to forward motion.

Traction - Another major concern while driving in the snow is traction. Anyone with experience while driving in winter conditions knows the necessity of road crews and their crucial service of pavement treatment. One element of successful leadership is seen in this. Leadership is about keeping on the road. When we cannot stay on the road due to lack of traction, our momentum is stalled. In the worst case scenario, the project could become a total wreck.



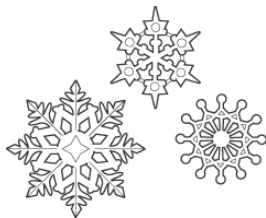
Confidence is also key. Even when conditions are absolutely horrible, a cool-headed driver exudes hope to the passengers. This assurance brings out the best in the other passengers. A positive (yet, realistic) attitude is important for any group leader. This sets the tone of the journey. When fear registers on the face of a normally calm driver, passengers may lose faith.

Utilizing resources from the group - An important part of leadership is using the talents of others for the good of the group and the success of the project. The driver in the snow storm may select a navigator and someone to obtain information on road conditions through the radio or cell phone. This division of labor allows oth-



ers to be useful parts of the enterprise. It also keeps them engaged during times of stress. Otherwise, they are untapped potential or simply frustrated, fearful passengers.

Tact - The back seat driver is normally viewed as a negative partner. Those who peevishly direct the driver drain the confidence of the group, raise stress levels, and dilute the authority of the leader. In the car and in the office, it takes tact to defuse this behavior without disenfranchising any team member. Such a balancing act can be achieved by an effective person in charge.



Whatever the driving conditions, a group of people in a car normally travel harmoniously. However, the added stress of adverse winter conditions can strain the formerly placid experience. Leading in difficult times, while certainly less than pleasant, aids in professional growth. And use of these skills ultimately means the difference between reaching the goal safely or becoming immobile and helpless.

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.

MAKE YOUR VOTE COUNT!

Did you know that Michigan Department of Corrections Director Patricia Caruso is running for Vice President of the American Correctional Association? Don't forget to make your voice heard in the upcoming ACA elections. Log on to www.ACA.org for more information.

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 May 2008 edition.





MCA CONFERENCE IS A HIT

MCA's Winter mini-conference was a big hit. The dual topic program was well attended with over 100 participants. MCA looks forward to bringing more mini-conferences to you in the future. If you have a topic for a conference please let us know.



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