



Contents:

AWEC Conference.....3

SAI Hosts Operation Starting Line.....4

No Supplemental Necessary for MDOC.....4

People Make the Difference.....5

Reentry Roundtable.....7

DIRECTOR HEYNS MAKES EMPLOYEE SAFETY A TOP PRIORITY

Since his first day with the Michigan Department of Corrections, Director Heyns has made safety a priority. Protecting staff is at the forefront of that effort. The introduction of Tasers into correctional facilities is diminishing the need for physical confrontations with prisoners. Collaborative Case Management is fostering better communication between prisoners and staff, while cognitive programming is getting prisoners to consider consequences before they act.

Yet even with all these tools, prisoners are sometimes still willing, for a variety of reasons, to risk attacking employees. Recent incidents include assaults on a school teacher, a nurse and a corrections officer. In the assault of the teacher, an alert corrections officer controlled the prisoner who had knocked the teacher to the ground and was trying to gain control of her. The nurse, who couldn't reach her personal protection device, was nearly dragged into a cell and escaped by slipping out of the jacket the prisoner was trying to drag her with. The officer was attacked from behind by a prisoner who tried to use a braided rope to choke her. Another officer responded and controlled the prisoner.

Maintaining situational awareness is a key component of safety. Department employees inside prisons, in the community and even in central office, need to have an enhanced awareness of their surroundings and the people in them who could be potential threats. Here are some ways to maintain awareness and analyze potential threats within your environment.

- Mentally prepare for each duty shift. You must be ready, both physically and mentally to go to work and deal with potential threats presented in the prison environment. Some ways to maintain mental readiness are to play "what-if" games with coworkers. These games allow you to consider and create solutions for situations you may encounter. Part of mental preparation is having a "survivor mentality." If you encounter a life or death



STAFF SAFETY (Continued on page 2)



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**STAFF SAFETY** (Continued from page 1)

situation, you must have an attitude that you will survive no matter what. You will escape the assault, the prisoner, or the confinement in a cell or room. You must be ready to do what it takes to subdue, overcome, or free yourself from an attacker. Mental preparation decreases reaction time. For you to react, you must perceive, analyze and evaluate, develop an action plan and initiate action. If you are mentally prepared for situations, you will not only be more likely to deal with situations that are encountered in the prison setting, you will respond faster and more appropriately to those situations. Furthermore, you will project a level of confidence that may actually reduce the likelihood of a prisoner assault.

- Physically prepare yourself. Most of us are typical Americans. We might be a little overweight, our cardiovascular health will get us up a few flights of stairs, but we would be in trouble if we had to struggle with an attacker for more than a few minutes. Prisoner attackers generally prey on the weak. When we invest in physical fitness, we are more likely to be able to fight off an attack and still have reserve energy to run for help.
- Train like it's the real thing. Everyone working with prisoners on a daily basis has prisoner management training. The training is a foundation for skill development. It gives each of us the tools we need to control prisoners who are exhibiting potentially violent behavior. We control prisoners in a variety of ways including our presence, verbal direction, through physical force and a variety of non-lethal and lethal tools. The Department provides a skill proficiency level that meets state and national standards. However, to be



very confident in your ability to control prisoners when the need arises, you need to practice the skills on your own and with coworkers when you can. Enrolling in local programs that enhance your self-defense capabilities are also helpful. In any situation, you should only use the amount of force necessary to control the situation. In some cases, that may mean running and yelling for help. In other situations, it may mean using deadly force so that you survive and go home to those you love. Understanding the policies that govern our use of force and being able to apply control tactics fluidly at any level of prisoner resistance are paramount to successfully ending a prisoner assault. Train for the real thing and train often.



- The buddy system is a must in a prison environment. Three of the last four staff murdered by prisoners were on single person assignments where prisoners had access to weapons and confined or easily barricaded areas. Two of those murders happened on an assignment where there were supposed to be no prisoners, yet prisoners manipulated their way into the area and overpowered the employee before help could arrive. Personal Protection Devices (PPDs), radios, cameras and other security systems are only as effective as those who monitor and use them. Knowing where your partners are and keeping them informed about where you are helps keep everyone safe and reduces response time when an incident occurs. If you are a non-custody employee, make sure officers know where you are and whether you are in close proximity to prisoners. If you get into a situation where you need help, activate all available safety systems and yell for help. It may save your life.

**STAFF SAFETY** (Continued on page 3)

**STAFF SAFETY** (Continued from page 2)

- Environmental awareness is one of the key concepts that keeps us safe. We use it all the time in a variety of circumstances, yet there are increasingly more distractions in our daily lives that lead to loss of focus. In a prison setting, if you lose your focus, you could lose your life. Maintaining focus takes skill, training, appropriate rest and nourishment. Things to be aware of at all times while inside the fences are the size, strength, weight and age of the prisoner, unknown abilities of the prisoner, ratio of prisoners to staff in the area, the presence of weapons or possible weapons in the area, history of violence or assault by the prisoners being supervised, other potential victims, "safe" areas and exits of retreat or escape.
- Another area of safety is the state of the prisoner. What is their cooperative state? Are they totally cooperative, potentially cooperative, or totally uncooperative? Do they have problems perceiving the environment rati-



ally? That may include a history of mental illness, sociopathic tendencies, anger toward authority or a change in their life status. These are all things that need to be constantly considered. If you fail to properly determine the current state of the prisoners you are working around or supervising, it could cost you your life.

Even if you do all of these things, there is no guarantee that you won't be assaulted. Prisoners, like all humans to some degree, are inherently unpredictable. Correctional facilities, by their very nature, are dangerous places to work. However, being mentally and physically prepared, training for the "what-ifs," using the buddy system and employing any other available tools will help maintain staff safety. Additionally, teamwork, vigilance, fairness, integrity, clear communication and a positive attitude will go a long way in reducing staff assaults and maintaining a safe and secure prison.

*Do you have ideas that enhance employee safety? Share them with FYI at [cordellj@michigan.gov](mailto:cordellj@michigan.gov).*

**AWEC CONFERENCE IS SEPTEMBER 14-16, 2012**

The Association of Women Executives in Corrections (AWEC) will have its annual conference this year in Little Rock, Arkansas. AWEC provides leadership development for executive women, supports career advancement of women in corrections and promotes informed discussion on correctional issues.

AWEC is pleased to announce its 2012 Training Institute September 14-16, 2012. The focus of the 16th annual training program is "Women as Born Leaders: Developing Our Natural Talents." Speakers include Leann Bertsch, Jennie Lancaster, Mary Livers, Jodie Maesaka-Hirata, Colette S. Peters, LaDonna Thompson, Dora Schiro, Shirley Moore Smeal and Diane DeBarri. Information and registration forms can be found on the AWEC Web site at [www.awec.us](http://www.awec.us). You can also call (405) 872-5837 or email [info@awec.us](mailto:info@awec.us).



## SAI HOSTS OPERATION STARTING LINE

On Saturday June 9, 2012, Special Alternative Incarceration (SAI) hosted Operation Starting Line (OSL) - In Prison Event. OSL is a faith-based group bringing performers from all over Michigan to perform in various prisons. Special guests included Sonnie Day, Rufus Harris, Rappers Gideon Crew, and Strongman Greg (nickname Mitts). There were two separate events that day, one for the female trainees and one for the male trainees.



The females' performance was held in the school auditorium where 47 trainees participated. At times emotions were high and tears flowed down cheeks as the performers would speak of life experiences, faith and staying strong. Other times the trainees were up dancing and singing along. One female was chosen to sing with Singer/Songwriter Sonnie Day, and another was chosen to test the metal horseshoe brought by Strongman Greg who twisted it into an "S" shape.



The performance for male trainees was held on the yard where 273 trainees participated while seated in the grass. Many of the trainees swayed along to the blues tunes produced by Rufus Harris, and cringed as they watched Strongman Greg bend a steel bar in his teeth. The male trainees were touched most listening to the stories of the Gideon Crew. They were inspired by their heartfelt stories of where they had been, and how they got to be where they are now. It gave the trainees something to look forward to as they listened to the Gideon Crew rap about faith and life.

Overall, it was a very positive experience for both trainees and staff.

## NO SUPPLEMENTAL NECESSARY TO COVER BUDGET

The Michigan Department of Corrections has completed the budget process and it appears there will be no need for fiscal year (FY) 2011-12 supplemental funding. The Senate Appropriations Committee publicly identified the Michigan Department of Corrections for their fiscal responsibility in containing their spending and for not needing any supplemental funding in FY 2011-12. Senator Proos commended the Department for their hard work and said it was a big step in the right direction in comparison to previous years when the Department needed supplemental funding to balance their budget.



**LIFESAVING AWARDS FOR ALERT RESPONDERS****PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE****Assault Intervention**

On February 5, 2012 Officer Steven Beebe of Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility responded to a call for assistance from a fellow officer. A prisoner had looped a braided string around the neck of another officer and was pulling it tight in an attempt to choke the officer. Beebe immediately responded with a control technique that persuaded the prisoner to release the braided rope. The officer was treated at a local hospital and the prisoner was escorted to a secure cell. Beebe's quick reaction and control of the prisoner saved the other officer's life. His conduct during the incident is an excellent example of professional integrity and professionalism. The Department is proud to have employees of Beebe's caliber.



*L to R: A/Deputy Warden Dave Fenby, RPA Bruce Curtis, Officer Steven Beebe receiving his Lifesaving Award, Deputy Director Tom Finco, A/Warden Cathleen Stoddard, and Captain Jay Sanchez*

**Choking During Chow**

Officer Ruth Brown and Officer Garza-Martin of Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility were eating lunch with fellow employee Dave Hendrickson, when he started choking on a piece of hotdog. Officer Brown asked if he was choking and he indicated he was by putting his hands up by his throat. Officer Brown quickly administered abdominal thrusts to dislodge the object. The fellow employee was okay and was very thankful for the lifesaving act. Brown maintained professionalism and acted decisively during the incident and was recognized with a Lifesaving Award.



*L to R: Warden Ken McKee, RPA Bruce Curtis, Dave Hendrickson, Officer Ruth Brown receiving her Lifesaving Award, and Deputy Director Tom Finco.*

**Prisoner in Distress**

On April 26, 2012, Officer Andjelko Jovicic of Gus Harrison Correctional Facility was monitoring chow lines when he saw a prisoner in distress and having difficulty breathing. Jovicic immediately assessed the situation and determined the prisoner was choking. He performed abdominal thrusts until a piece of orange was dislodged from the prisoner's throat. The prisoner was evaluated and returned to his unit. Officer Jovicic's actions reflect positively on his facility and the Department as a whole.





## WEST SHORELINE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY EMBRACES WELLNESS

West Shoreline Correctional Facility completes "Six Weeks to Wellness" every year and many employees benefit from the program. Each week, there was a new health topic with a speaker that covered exercise, diabetes, health, eating fruits and vegetables daily, low fat eating, and dealing with stress. Several local workout businesses also provided information including Curves for Women and Spring Lake Gym. One speaker discussed how to de-stress in 15 minutes. During week six, the facilitator had a

wellness fair with several vendors available to demonstrate and discuss wellness products and services.

Many employees from both Earnest C. Brooks and West Shoreline correctional facilities participated in the program. Wellness winners from each week and the overall winner each received a prize. The facilitator was so interested in helping deliver "Six Weeks" that she planned the program on her own time and used her own annual leave to attend the presentations.



PEOPLE MAKE THE DIFFERENCE

## MDOC EMPLOYEE HELPS PILOT WHO LANDED "IN HIS BACK YARD"

On June 6, 2012, Parole Board Specialist Ron Carrero witnessed a single engine airplane make an emergency landing in the wheat field near his house. Ron's wife was coming home and saw the plane in the field and a man walking around. She picked Ron up and both went to the landing site which was about 1,000 feet from their home. Ron went into the field and checked the plane for any occupants who may need assistance, then made contact with the man who turned out to be the pilot. He was a little shaken up, but otherwise okay. The

man had taken off from Willow Run Airport en route to Lowell when he started having engine problems and began losing altitude. He tried to make the Charlotte airport, but came up short. The pilot decided to ditch it into the wheat field, avoiding area trees and power lines. Although he had a hard landing, the plane was in good shape. The pilot diagnosed the problem as a broken fuel primer cable. Ron stayed with the man until his wife arrived to give him a ride home. The next morning he came back, repaired the cable, and flew home.





## **REENTRY ROUNDTABLE**

*Reentry Roundtable* is a continuing column that provides news, facts, and program successes within the prisoner reentry program.

### **SOAR Program Proves Successful for Calhoun Prisoner Reentry Participants**

Achieving financial self-sufficiency is key to successfully reintegrating from prison into the community. Returnees are referred to Employment Readiness services. They are co-enrolled, when possible, in Michigan Works! and other programs to leverage additional resources. When returnees are unable to work or obtain wages sufficient to support themselves, they may be eligible for SSI/SSDI benefits from the Social Security Administration. Obtaining the benefits can prove a daunting, lengthy process. During this time, the individual risks homelessness and becoming dependent on community charitable institutions.

To address these needs, Calhoun Site's Community Resource Specialist Tammy Burbey is SOAR trained (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery). She acts as the appointed representative for obtaining benefits. To qualify for the SOAR program, a returnee must be homeless or at risk of becoming homeless and have mental illness and/or a co-occurring disorder. In conjunction with obtaining identification for participants (if needed), Tammy engages with the participants and completes extensive applications for from the Social Security Administration. Processing takes 2-3 hours per week for each client. Another positive outcome of the SOAR process is the constructive working relationship fostered between the Social Security Administration office and the SOAR trained representative.

During this time, Tammy remains engaged with the participant, assisting them with transportation, clothing and other needs as referred by the agent. Agents can also refer the participant for housing assistance and other services through Prisoner Reentry. Tammy has opened 14 cases for participants. Of those, five received successful determinations, three are pending, two are on appeal, three discharged

prior to completion of the process and one was returned. Tammy completes the process in 90-120 days versus the average of one to three years for an unassisted applicant.

Tammy said, "Without SOAR, our participants would have a difficult time with the SSI/SSDI application process. I'm glad to be able to assist them with navigating through the system. I have seen the participant's attitude change to be more positive when they feel like they are getting the help they need and are not alone. I believe they have a better outlook on their future and that they begin to believe that they can become self-sufficient."

Janelle is currently working with Tammy on obtaining benefits. Janelle, who was paroled March 2012, has already qualified for SSD benefits and has received a letter that a SSI determination should be completed in 90-120 days. Janelle said that Tammy and other Prisoner Reentry staff were a "huge help in getting back on my feet." Without Tammy's assistance, "I wouldn't have known what to do. All the Prisoner Reentry staff have helped me." Janelle is currently in Prisoner Reentry housing and working with Tammy on a budget to set up her own housing arrangement.

Janelle has found guidance in Isaiah, 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed for I am your God." Janelle is interested in joining a Bible study with the Mentoring Program. Her future includes "writing a book with my father: Looking from the Inside Out and getting a job."



*L to R: Janelle and Calhoun County Resource Specialist Tammy Burbey work on benefits that will help her succeed.*

*The article was submitted by Calhoun Prisoner Reentry Site Community Coordinator Mike DeBoer.*

**Prisoner Reentry**

