

# CORRECTIONAL OASIS

A PUBLICATION OF DESERT WATERS CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH  
A NON-PROFIT FOR THE WELL-BEING OF CORRECTIONAL STAFF & THEIR FAMILIES

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SEPTEMBER 2006

From Caterina's Desk

## Murder In The Ranks

This is the second time this year that a Maryland Correctional Officer has been murdered by an inmate. (Correctional Officer **Jeffery A. Wroten**, 44, died on January 27, a day after he was shot in the face with his own gun by an inmate he was guarding at a hospital in Hagerstown, MD.)

Maryland House of Corrections Officer **David McGuinn**, 42, was counting inmates alone in the maximum-security prison late on July 25 when he was attacked and stabbed several times in the neck and lower torso by two inmates. Apparently, the inmates found a way to jam locks on their cells, and were able to exit their cells during the count. The facility, built in 1878, has "1929-vintage locks" which were upgraded in 1986, according to Correction Commissioner Frank C. Sizer, Jr. Officer McGuinn, a two-year veteran, is survived by a daughter and his fiancée.

Correctional Officer **Wayne "Cotton" Morgan**, employee of Brushy Mountain, was shot one year ago on August 9, 2005, during an escape attempt at the Roane County Courthouse, Kingston, TN. In memory of the first anniversary of his murder, Corrections Officers stood at his grave site in 30 minute shifts from 6 am to 6 pm.

P.S. As I was writing this on August 21, news broke regarding a jailed offender who escaped from a hospital in VA after wrestling a gun away from a sheriff's deputy, seriously wounding him and fatally shooting **Derrick McFarland**, an unarmed hospital security guard, and sheriff's Corporal **Eric E. Sutphin**.

P.P.S. As we were laying out this issue of the newsletter we were informed that on August 22 a sheriff's deputy at Jackson County, GA, was shot with his own gun three times during an escape attempt while he was transporting inmates to and from the county courthouse. The deputy survived the shooting and is reported to be in the hospital in stable condition.

From The Old Screw

## Fair Shake

Mr. President, and all Governors, Senators, Representatives and County Commissioners of our grand 50 States:

We need a big favor and a lot of help. We know it is a bad time for funding, but there are Correctional Officers, sheriff's deputies, and law enforcement officers who are dying every day trying to do their jobs while short of staff. The Military overseas is very brave in their fighting. Correctional Officers have no weapons except a pen and paper. Has anyone of you ever really thought of the risks that Correctional Officers, police and sheriff's deputies face daily? I can tell you, it's the pits. Every day you go to work, you leave with the understanding that there is a possibility that you may not come home, that you may never see your beloved family again.

How many of you would willingly walk into a yard with up to 1,200 inmates milling around? Who would work a cell house with (if you're lucky) three staff to over 300 inmates? I've seen one Officer to 105 inmates.

You may say, "That's their job. They knew what they were getting into."

My answer: It's called needing to feed your family and doing a job that not many have the nerve to do. Look at female staff. They risk getting raped and killed the same as the male staff. Look at the job market and see what other employers pay as much, and with benefits, for a single mother with a high school education, especially in rural areas. (Sometimes the health insurance stinks, but it's better than nothing.)

Look at the sheriff's deputies at the jails and on patrol, a lot of times by themselves. The criminal element is often better armed or as well-armed as law enforcement. Yet each day the deputies go out to do their job the best they can. They, like Correctional Staff, work all kinds of shifts, have weird days off, and work every

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# The Sonar-I for Corrections

*We are pleased to introduce to corrections professionals a new instrument that helps streamline offender assessment while also reducing clinician workload.*

*This offender assessment instrument, the Standardized Offender Needs and Risks Indicator™, was constructed and tested by Mike Denhof, Ph.D. In the paragraphs that follow, Dr. Denhof describes the SONAR-I.*

Contemporary correctional institutions (jails, prisons, halfway houses, parole and probation supervision entities) are often overburdened with offenders to manage. Many facilities take in large volumes of new offenders daily with comparatively few assessment personnel available. The circumstances lend to increased assessment mistakes, increased judgment errors, staff burn-out, less informed offender management decisions, less informed treatment referrals, reduced safety, and less orderly correctional environments overall.

While there are a handful of assessment instrument options available today for correctional personnel, they suffer from one or more weaknesses, such as excessive administration time, poor coverage of key content areas, excessive interpretation time, excessive opportunity for judgment bias and error, and/or lengthy and convoluted narrative results.

The SONAR-I was designed to overcome many of these drawbacks. It effectively uses a self-report format with offenders and is both self- and group-administrable in 15 to 20 minutes. The burdens of scoring, interpretation, and report production are eliminated through outsourcing. Assessment personnel simply fax completed one-page answer sheets to SONAR-I Company LLC for confidential processing. Within 24 hours a concise one-page risk/need profile report is returned (by email attachment) for each completed answer sheet sent.

Risk/need profile reports include (1) a multi-bar chart of scale elevations that are directly comparable, (2) objective risk/need estimates in a range of key offender assessment areas, and (3) statistically-derived recommendations for action. Risk/need estimates cover the following areas: suicide, mental disorder, criminal mentality, substance abuse, faking of symptoms, ly-

ing/response distortion, rule violations, and general criminal recidivism. The instrument reliably measures criminogenic factor areas that are most compatible with commonly available treatment types and programs (e.g., substance abuse, criminal thinking, mental disorder, violent behavior).

Another unique feature of the SONAR-I is its Custom Norms service option. With this option results are calibrated not only to a facility's local offender population, but also to its major offender subgroups, including gender and ethnicity. The custom norms service promotes increasingly sharp accuracy of risk/need estimates over time and eliminates the problem of potential measurement error that might follow from cultural and gender differences.

The SONAR-I is based on rigorously developed results-production methods and its scales have been

found to be reliable, valid, and conceptually distinctive. Each scale correlates significantly with a variety of criteria, including quantitative historical data

**It can ... optimize the level of safety and orderliness of your correctional environment.**

pertaining to criminal record, institutional misconduct, mental health treatment, substance abuse treatment, and scores from other assessment tools. *In a recent study the instrument was found able to predict future institutional rule violations for offender treatment program participants.*

A formal write-up of the foundational development work and psychometric properties of the SONAR-I is currently being prepared and will be made available on the company website for free download within the next few weeks. In the meantime, see [www.SONAR-I.com](http://www.SONAR-I.com) for an overview of product details, and mention this article to receive a 25% promotional discount on your first order.

Bottom line: The SONAR-I offers a research-based and technologically modern approach to both streamlining your offender assessment process and reducing the burden of labor-intensive assessment tasks. It can facilitate more consistent and fully-informed offender management decisions and, ultimately, optimize the level of safety and orderliness of your correctional environment.

## Trainings

### COLORADO TRAININGS

We began our free-of-charge regional Colorado trainings on *Stress Busting: Managing Correctional Staff Stress*, thanks to a grant from Caring For Colorado Foundation. We offered two trainings each at the Conejos County Sheriff's Office in Antonito, the La Plata County Jail and Hilltop House, a community corrections facility in Durango, and the Moffat County Jail in Craig. A total of 48 staff attended the trainings.

**ACA'S 136<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS OF CORRECTION**  
DWCO's Executive Director, Caterina Spinaris, and Board Vice-President, Beverly Embry Anderson, attended ACA's 136<sup>th</sup> Congress of Correction in Charlotte, NC. DWCO had a booth at the Exhibit Hall and Caterina presented a workshop on our unique program, the Corrections Ventline, which was attended by 21 staff.

Participant's comment:

*I believe this block of information was the most resourceful thus far during the conference. It offers an avenue for officers/employees that is much needed in this line of work. Oftentimes correctional employees'*

*needs are overlooked. This workshop should be offered at all future conferences. Thank you for caring and being there (24/7) when needed. Great work. Keep it up. I will take this information back to my workplace and offer it to our employees.*

**YOU ASKED FOR IT, SO HERE IT IS!**

### WE TRAIN YOUR TRAINERS!

**Topic: Stress Busting: Managing Correctional Employee Stress.**

**Trainer:** Dr. Caterina Spinaris.

**Date & time:** Oct. 19 and 20, 2006, from 9pm-5pm.

**Location:** DWCO offices, 431 E. Main, Florence, CO.

**To register:** Mail/email us your information at DWCO, P.O. Box 355, Florence, CO 81226-0355 or at [desertwaters@desertwaters.com](mailto:desertwaters@desertwaters.com). (Trainer's name, facility name, address, phone, fax and email.)

**Fee:** \$600 per person. To be paid online at <http://www.desertwaters.com/a-donations.htm>, or by check to DWCO, PO Box 355, Florence, CO 81226-0355.

## Letter To The Editor

Dear Desert Waters:

A friend attended a town meeting in Florence a few weeks ago about concerns for community and staff safety at the Federal Correctional Complex. She told me that a speaker there reported that nationwide 49 correctional workers have been killed in the line of duty over the last 5 years, and that an average of 33,000 are assaulted by inmates every year. Are these numbers for real? Why haven't we heard anything about that before? And we live in a prison county! The only experience I've had with people who work in prisons is seeing them at Kwik Stop or Wal-Mart while they're still in uniform. (By the way, a lot of them don't make eye contact, and some barely respond when I try to greet them.) How can we care for or appreciate correctional officers if we don't know what they go through?

*Puzzled and Perturbed*

Dear Puzzled and Perturbed:

You are right. Unless the general public is more informed about the realities correctional staff face on the job, they are not going to feel compassion or respect for them, or gratitude toward them. Colorado Department of Corrections spokespersons and the Federal Bureau of Prisons Public Information Officers release information to the media. Staff murders on the job and serious staff injuries are reported.

I wonder if the lack of public awareness has anything to do with our culture's lack of esteem for correctional employees and their work. Law enforcement officers and sheriff's deputies on patrol protect us "on the outside." We call on them in situations where we feel endangered. Corrections and detention staff, on the other hand, keep convicted and pre-trial offenders from escaping and possibly hurting us in the "free world." Since their work is not relevant to our immediate welfare, it's out of sight, out of mind. We don't pay attention and we remain indifferent. What we do remember is negative press when one of these workers crosses a boundary with inmates or uses excessive force. How many times do we read about correctional officers who save inmates' lives when they break up fights or intercept intelligence? The more I learn about the prison and jail workplace, the more I marvel at the complexity of skillfulness required to be a good Officer.

*(Continued on page 4)*

# Desert Waters

Correctional Outreach



*a non-profit organization  
for the well-being of correctional  
staff and their families*

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To **donate online** through PayPal,  
please go to:

<http://www.desertwaters.com/a-donations.htm>

## MANY THANKS!

**Individual donors:** Anonymous donor, Colleen Abdoulah, Todd & Joellen Brown, Kathryn Chittenden, Harold & Becky Hutson, Wallace & Than Lundquist, Dave & Suzanne Marty, Judith Peters, Revs. Clint & Dr. Margie Pollard, Warden H.A. Rios, Jr., Chaplain Russell & Cheryl Scharf, Mike Tanner, Matthew von Hobe, and Donald Wallace & Angela Kantola.

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### BLOGS

<http://desertwaters.blogspot.com>  
<http://womenincorrections.blogspot.com>

**We Thank You For  
Your Support!**

The Corrections Ventline™  
1-866-YOU-VENT  
(866.968.8368)  
[youvent@desertwaters.com](mailto:youvent@desertwaters.com)

## Fair Shake

*(Continued from page 1)*

holiday.  
So you see, Ladies and Gentlemen, we need help badly. Yes, it will cost a lot of money. But it may allow a child to be with their parent while growing up. If you think I've made all this up, check the records. You may be surprised by the numbers. Forty-nine Correctional Officers have been killed in the US over the past five years. This world would be a scary place without Correctional Officers, sheriff's deputies and law enforcement officers to take care of "bad" guys and gals. Think of what it would be like to walk a mile in one of these officers' shoes. All they want and need is a fair shake by the people they have helped to elect.

Take care, *The Old Screw*

## Letter To The Editor

*(Continued from page 3)*

Regarding the avoiding of eye contact, I've heard others mention it. Correctional employees are continuously under the scrutiny of inmates who are studying them to find a chink in their armor, a vulnerability they could exploit. Therefore staff keep their guard up when at the facility, so inmates can't "read" them. What you've experienced is an outcome of their adapting to the safety needs of their workplace that becomes a way of life. As correctional employees have told me, they keep their shield up when in public as they have no idea who they may meet in the community.

Keep on caring! *Caterina*