

# CORRECTIONAL OASIS

HELPING CORRECTIONAL & OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES BUILD A MORE ENGAGED WORKFORCE

VOLUME: 21

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- From The Director's Desk
- Retire As Soon As You Qualify
- My Role in Life
- Over 30 Years "In the Business"
- It Only Takes One Raindrop
- When The Going Gets Tough - Part 3
- Quote Of The Month
- In Memoriam



DESERTWATERS.COM

JULY 2024



A Desert Waters Publication

A NON-PROFIT FOR THE HEALTH OF CORRECTIONAL & OTHER PUBLIC SAFETY AGENCIES, STAFF AND FAMILIES

# FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

With summer in full swing, I hope you get to enjoy the beautiful outdoors wherever you live!

We just celebrated the second National Correctional Family Appreciation Week in June. We were delighted by the support and keen interest shown for this celebration by several correctional agencies.

And now we shift our focus to another segment of corrections that also deserves our full attention and thanks—the retirees or those about to retire. This issue of the *Correctional Oasis* is dedicated to them. The articles are written by correctional professionals spanning the gamut, from an

administrator to two Corrections Officers to a probation/parole supervisor nearing retirement. They share about the toll of the job, hard-earned tips from experience about what contributed to their having meaningful careers, and how to move forward after their careers came to an end.

We hope you enjoy reading this material, and that it makes you pause and reflect on what you may need in order to start preparing for your retirement, whether that be in one year or 10 or 20.

*Caterina Spinaris*



# RETIRE AS SOON AS YOU QUALIFY

BY BRENT PARKER

*I*t's a beautiful Colorado summer day, and I'm standing on a golf course with a former correctional colleague. Gary retired a few years earlier, and I still have a few years to go before retiring. During our conversation, Gary says, "Retire as soon as you qualify. You don't know the stress you're under, until after you leave." I never forgot these words, and when it was time, I left corrections. As far as I'm concerned, truer words were never spoken. **Thank you, Gary.**

Retirement from any job is a big step in a person's life, and the pending changes are probably overwhelming for most. Even the most well-planned retirement is going to offer some challenges. However, retiring from corrections work and maybe law enforcement in general, is unique in many ways.

I'm sure no two retirements play out the same, but those of us who retire from corrections and law enforcement will likely face similar challenges. In spite of our diversity, we are all impacted by the work, and to consistently perform for twenty to thirty years is to experience many things the average non-law enforcement worker cannot imagine. This is to say ... **We leave corrections in one day, but corrections does not leave us for years ... maybe ever.**

Everyone carries their work career with them into retirement, but in most cases this memory bank is filled with positive outcomes and job satisfaction. The average non-corrections retiree has no memories of a blood-soaked offender dying on a gurney. They have no physical scars from being cut, bitten, or punched. Most retirees won't lose sleep because of violent images from years gone by, or feel their heart race when a random alarm sounds in Wal-Mart. Non-corrections retirees have no memories of running into a crowded rec yard to break up a gang fight, and very few non-corrections retirees recall standing at attention while a fallen partner is honored with a 21-gun salute. If you're a non-corrections person, you probably already see the uniqueness. If you are a corrections person, my apologies for reminding you of what you already can't forget.

I have been retired for almost seven years, and I've talked to many other retirees. Retirement is well-deserved, but it remains part of the corrections journey. So, as you contemplate leaving your corrections job, hopefully "as soon as you qualify," here are some things to watch for and contemplate.

To begin, some things you won't miss and some things you may miss:

## WHAT YOU WON'T MISS

- Negativity, worry, fear, and stress
- Being threatened and writing reports
- Clanking doors, alarms, radio chatter
- Offenders' poor behavior and manipulations
- The noise, smells, and the stale air
- Boring shifts and random violence
- Working 16-hour days on 5 hours of sleep (or less)
- Wrestling with offenders
- Working on holidays and your child's birthday
- Searching cells and touching gross stuff
- Being called in on your day off
- Being spit at or thrown on
- Fighting sleep and exhaustion
- Strip searches and potty watch
- Sore back, sore feet, bumps, and bruises
- Working on meaningless projects
- Lazy co-workers and ghost supervisor
- Doing more with less
- Another fad or "flavor of the month"
- Training just to "check the box"
- The bureaucracy and another policy change
- Being under-appreciated
- Long meetings that could have been an email
- And ... the 3-minute lunch break

You may miss other things, but I found the list of what I actually miss to be much shorter, and far more meaningful.

## WHAT YOU WILL ACTUALLY MISS

- Your best friends, partners, and coworkers
- Surviving the incident
- Teamwork and camaraderie
- Mentoring others
- Laughter and twisted humor
- Helping a co-worker through hard times
- Occasional successes
- And, of course ... potlucks and donuts 🍩

## **ISSUES YOU MAY FACE**

You may not face all these issues and some may only surface occasionally, but be aware. The day after you retire is not a magic day. It takes time to recover. It may take some counseling, lots of prayers and a huge

helping of forgiveness for others ... and **yourself**, before you feel normal. Watch for these to occur:

**Poor Sleep and Bad Memories.** After a career of sleeplessness, I'd love to say you're going to sleep like a baby in retirement. But it's not likely. All that accumulated stress and negativity is still there for a while. Those memories don't fade as fast as we want, and we can be reminded of horrible images and bad times in the most unlikely way, and at the oddest times. A TV show, even a fun comedy, can spark a memory and cause us to sweat, right there in our recliner. A smell or an alarm in a public place will take us back in time so quick we don't even know what happened. At night when it's so quiet and you want to sleep, your mind will replay incidents like a Stephen King movie on rewind. You will lay there, wide awake, second-guessing what could have happened or what should have been done. Hopefully, in retirement, you don't have to get up too early.

**Lack of Trust.** After years of distrust, we don't regain trust very quickly. We remain ever-vigilant and cautious around people. We remain distracted by safety and security. It took me a few years before I could sit with my back to a restaurant door. In public, my head is still on a swivel. I live in a safe, retirement community but, when we're away, I still check the security cameras at home like a control center officer with a yard full of convicts! The fact I even have security cameras at home probably says something.

This lack of trust spills into other areas of life. My wife and I moved to another state where we knew no one, and I found it difficult to make new friends. Even now, we are just getting to know our immediate neighbors. They are all great people; the problem was my desire to remain private and my own lack of trust.

**Family Issues.** Retirement may be hard for your family to adjust to, especially if relationships have been strained through the years. Corrections can change us in negative ways, and our family often bears the brunt of this grumpiness. It may take some patience, some candid discussions, and some forgiveness for all to come together again. Your family has also been through a 30-year corrections career, so they need to adjust, too. Family is such an important contributor to our overall health, and, hopefully, we have cherished what we have at home. If not, get busy mending, and be patient with your loved ones.

**Health Issues.** Don't be too surprised if you have some health issues in retirement. These may be age-related, but they might also be related to thirty years of stress. Check out the book, *The Body Keeps Score*, by Bessel van der

Kolk. The accumulation of stress takes its toll and we break down, physically and emotionally. I was retired less than one year, and had a heart attack. My wife drove me to the hospital like she was in NASCAR, and God spared me that day. I have no doubt this heart attack was caused by stored up stress. Many retirees have digestive issues and other serious health issues. Some retirees have been self-medicating their stress away with alcohol and cigarettes, and these behaviors catch up to us in retirement, as well. Even “fit” individuals can find themselves in an emergency room. Stay after your health. Get regular checkups, eat right, exercise and finally ... get some well-deserved sleep.

**Depression, Anxiety, Loneliness.** Some retirees may go through periods of depression or sadness, unexplainable anxiety or even loneliness. You may feel less valuable without your work identity and you may long to belong to another team. It may feel like no one needs you anymore and you may even miss the responsibilities and satisfaction of your old job. I think these feelings are temporary for most retirees, as we find new ways to feel successful. If feelings linger or feel overwhelming, please don't be afraid to seek help. You may have some guilt over something you did or didn't do, and you may have some unresolved trauma. Forgive yourself, and get some professional help if needed.

**Missing Work.** It's hard to imagine, but you may miss some of what you left behind. I still have friends and partners who work inside, and I still want to know how they're doing. You'll hear about agency changes – good and bad, and it will weigh on your mind. We can physically walk away, but we can't always disconnect mentally or emotionally to what we've been so invested in for so many years.

Corrections is a hard job to totally “escape” from, and you may want to stay connected in some way. If you're interested, there are Facebook pages where corrections people come together to share stories and discuss “our unique world.” Some state and local agencies may have their own Facebook pages as well, and some agencies have annual gatherings, picnics, and events specifically for retirees. Just seeing old partners once in a while can make you feel connected. These sites and events are a great way to stay in touch with people, when you choose to.

**Caution:** The more you stay in direct touch with the corrections environment, the longer it may take for you to lose sight of those bad memories. It might take you longer to rid yourself of your Corrections Fatigue and fully relax. It's also likely you could be triggered at some point, and find yourself remembering traumatic events

or reliving old feelings of anxiety. Proceed with caution. When you're ready, let it go and move on. **"The past is for learning; the future is for living."**

**Get Busy Living.** It's pretty common to slow down in retirement but please don't stop living. Get some rest and make some plans for moving forward. If you choose to work in your retirement, I would encourage you to find something as far removed from corrections work as possible. This may help the bad memories fade a little faster. You have people skills that translate to other fields so, if possible, try something completely different. Returning to law enforcement, security work or anything similar to corrections may bring back bad memories and trigger continued stress.

Retirement is your time to do all the things you talked about all those years. Live your dreams ... travel, ride that motorcycle, sail that boat, play golf, join a club, cook, garden, volunteer somewhere, take a class, write a book, or build something. I think a lot of corrections retirees like doing something with a tangible finished product ... something we can see or hold. We rarely had anything tangible in corrections work.

After years of hard work, long hours, and so many people, you may feel like building a cocoon at home and isolating. This may serve you well for a while, but I hope you eventually get back out there. Isolation can invite substance abuse and poor health, and inactivity will allow the mind to revisit those bad memories. Please avoid becoming a couch potato. Get back out there and meet some people ... learn to trust again. Maybe some new activities and new memories can replace those old ones or at least help them fade away. You earned your retirement, so enjoy! **Happy Retirement!**

You didn't hear **Thank You** very often during your corrections career; none of us did. So, to close, I would like to say **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE.** You worked hard and you *earned* your retirement. Be safe, be healthy and enjoy.

If you're reading this and are still working in corrections, "Retire as soon as you qualify. You don't know the stress you're under, until you leave."



# FROM CORRECTIONS FATIGUE TO FULFILMENT™

Online Instructor Training

Send your vetted staff to become certified CF2F instructors to offer **staff healthy, research-based, career-long coping skills.**

**Dates and times will be announced soon.**

[MORE INFORMATION](#)



Click or scan the code to register.



# MY ROLE IN LIFE

BY THE OLD SCREW

*All our lives people say "My role in life is \_\_\_\_\_" (fill in the blank)*

*All my life I've thought, what's my role?  
Only after I've gotten old have I realized  
Peacemaker, helping others, understanding  
I never wanted to work in prisons, God did  
I never wanted to be around killers, rapists  
Never thought I was a brave, tough man  
For thirty-five years God guided me  
He protected me, gave me understanding  
Not to judge others, work with all  
Nothing surprised me more than to be  
Called a hard-nosed cop, cold-hearted SOB  
No feelings, no emotions, not caring  
For a while I only cared for my family  
Only thing else was little kids and animals  
And I'd think, is this my role in life?  
And every time I tried to quit, God says no  
Others need help, but you must go it alone  
Yes, I was angry with God, why why why  
But again, you can't quit, people need you  
So I guess I know my role in life, why why*



# OVER 30 YEARS “IN THE BUSINESS”

BY A RETIRED CORRECTIONS OFFICER

I retired from our department a little over a year ago. I was very fortunate to be able to retire when I wanted to, and did not have to retire because of health or other reasons. I had prepared myself as best that I could through reading/studying several books and speaking to people who had retired before me. I can honestly say that even though I thought that I was ready, I was still in for a bit of a surprise. Kind of like having children, I guess.

During our time in our departments, we expend a lot of emotional and physical capital trying to do our jobs well. We have standards to keep and a gazillion policies, procedures, and post orders to know. And we have performance goals to meet. Then one day we wake up, and we no longer have to keep those in mind. Yeah!!! I discovered through my reading that to make retirement productive I needed to set new goals. Too many times I heard of people and I observed folks that retired and just fell into thinking that they had all the time in the world, and then one day the mind and the body started deteriorating. I vowed that I would not become one of those.

There were many highs in my time and many lows. I still recall the first inmate suicide that I was involved in. It happened just a few years into my career. I still see the scene when the cell door was opened. Cell 4-66. The inmate had cut his arm, and there was a lot of blood on the floor. A coworker and I administered CPR until we were relieved by medical staff. Unfortunately, he did not make it. There were a couple of other suicide attempts toward the end of my career. Fortunately, they made it. On the whole, many of those moments, high and low, stick with us. Many times, those memories are triggered by just some minute thing or event.

I was able to join a great group of men in our church (who are retired) each Wednesday that do work around the church. It saves the congregation a lot of money, but most importantly, gives each of us a great opportunity to serve others. Then, after our work is done, we go to a local coffee shop. Another thing I started doing was being a paid substitute in our local school district, working in food service. Although I was an officer in our department, I have a background in food. It is a pretty good fit for the most part. I work because I want to, not because I have to. And I do it when I want to. I'm also able to spend more time in the gym working out. Shortly

after I retired, I was in the gym one afternoon and started looking around, "Wow, there are a lot of old people here," I thought. Then the light went on in my head. Dang, I'm one of them. I had a good chuckle over that one.

Like one of the letters you received, I too wish our department had offered us a retirement preparation class or some kind of re-entry to society class. Once in a while, my wife will ask how I slept, and on occasion, I tell her that I worked last night, meaning I had a dream about my work. A few have been rough, but there have been a few. I too have at times struggled with my new normal of retirement, and like many others, I miss the structure and challenges of my former profession and the many situations we had to overcome. The oldie but goodie saying, "failure is not an option," rang so true. My wife also does substitute work in our school district, but in another area. She has struggled as well with the challenges of me being home more and, truth be told, my grumpy moods at times. I read somewhere that it takes about two years to fully adjust to retirement, and at first, I didn't believe it. But after some months, I realized that it was probably true.

I struggle with getting older and the body/mind not working as I would like them to. My mind says I'm forty or fifty, but my body says differently, right? I miss a lot of the people that I used to work with, but there is a retiree lunch every month at a local pizza restaurant that I attend. It's so great seeing some of my former coworkers, and yes, telling old war stories. Most of them are the funny ones.

As when I was working, I still sit in restaurants and at church with my back against a wall or with a good view of the entrance. Loud noises still bother me, like the drums at church. I grocery shop early in the morning to avoid crowds. When my wife and I are out, I still find myself on high alert. I've learned to accept that this is more than likely the way I will be for the rest of my life.

Working in the correctional environment for over thirty years obviously changes you. I tried hard to not let it define me (easier said than done), as I knew there would come a day that I no longer would be there. The transition has been kind of a bumpy road at times, but I'm so grateful for my time in the department. And, yes, I am learning every day to be productive and enjoy my retirement.



Join us for Desert Waters'

# CORRECTIONAL FAMILY WELLNESS™

The data<sup>1</sup> show that correctional work can adversely impact not only correctional staff's mental health and physical health, but also their family health—staff's home life.

And when home life is not going well, functioning at work suffers also.

**Administrators, we will train** your carefully vetted employees to become certified Instructors of

Desert Waters' twin courses—**Correctional Family Wellness™** for **Adult Family Members** and also for **Staff**—to help prevent or reduce these negative effects, improving home life and feeding positively back into the workplace.

Additionally, DWCO Master Instructors are available to offer these courses to your staff and to their families as in-person Direct Delivery trainings.

### What participants have said:

- "Very relatable."
- "Informative and makes you take responsibility for positive change."
- "This was the best training I have ever received."

**Space is limited!**

**Nov. 13-15 & 18-20**

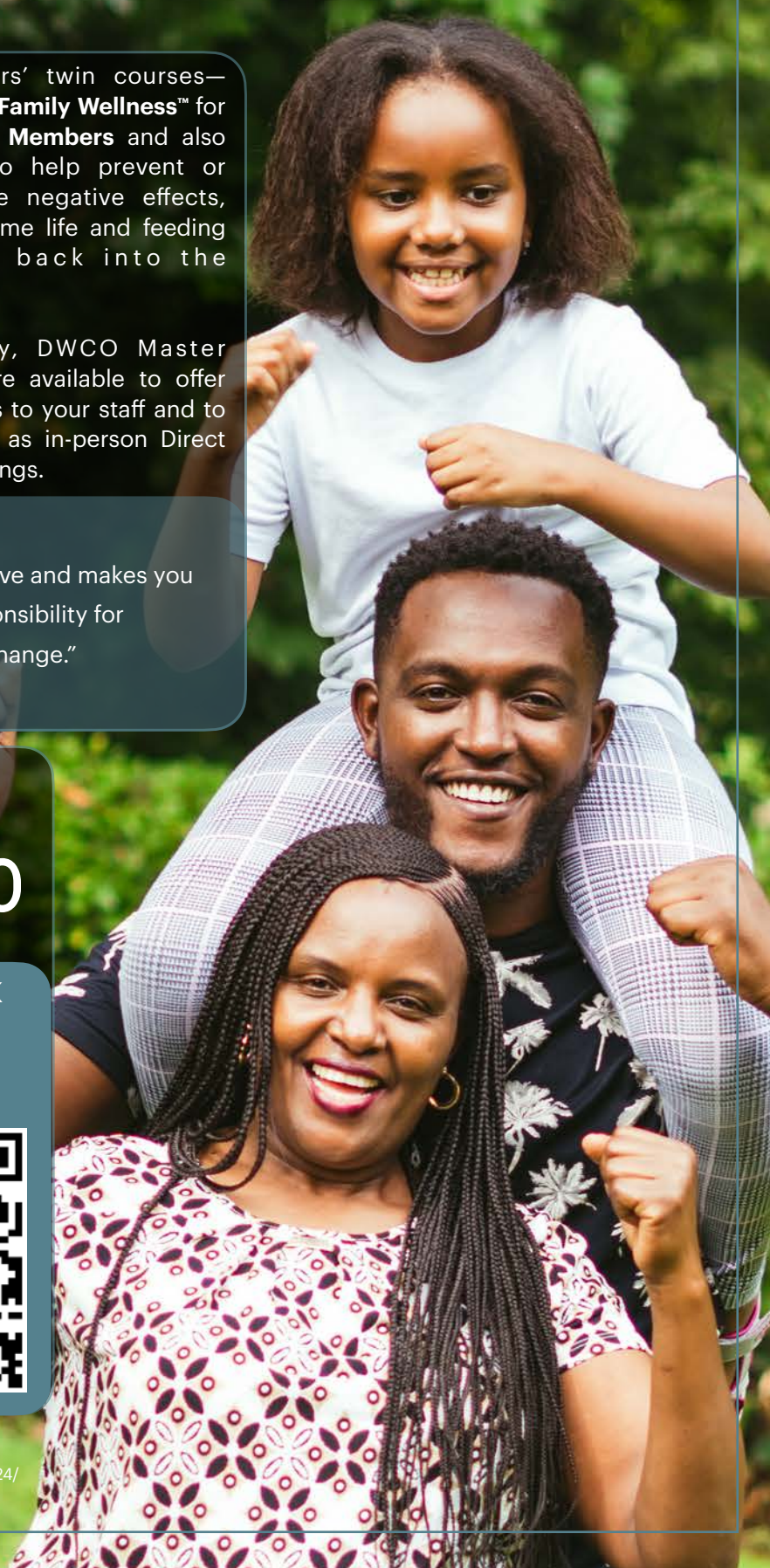
SCAN OR CLICK  
HERE FOR MORE  
INFORMATION:



SCAN OR CLICK  
HERE TO  
REGISTER:



<sup>1</sup>[https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/corrections/assets/Folder24/MDOC\\_Staff\\_Well-being\\_Report.pdf?rev=be4e9eed9510407aab03ce19bfc39e1](https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/corrections/assets/Folder24/MDOC_Staff_Well-being_Report.pdf?rev=be4e9eed9510407aab03ce19bfc39e1)



# IT ONLY TAKES ONE RAINDROP

BY ANN MARIE BRASKEY

Reprinted from the July 2017 issue of the *Correctional Oasis*.

*This article is composed of excerpts from Ann Marie Braskey's acceptance speech for the 2017 Adult Probation/Parole Professional of the Year award, given to her by the Pennsylvania Association on Probation, Parole and Corrections (PAPPC) during its 96th annual Training Institute and Conference on May 23, 2107. Her review of her 35-year career in Probation/Parole exemplifies attitudes and behaviors that promote resilience: purpose, perseverance, faith, optimism, realism, a personal moral compass, having mentors, altruism. Ann Marie is a Supervisor at the Luzerne County Department of Probation Services, Wilkes Barre, PA.*

I want to thank the PAPPC Awards Board for having selected me for this honor in 2017. I am sure that just about everyone in this room deserves recognition for their dedication and service to society and the offenders we supervise. It is gratifying to know that I am in good company. Please remember the impact each of you have on others.

I have thought long and hard about what I was going to say today in light of the fact that it took 35 years to get to this point in my career. I never really thought I would be here this long. When I started, I thought I would get some experience under my belt, and then move on to "bigger and better" things. I didn't realize I would become a "relic."

I could offer some words about inspiration to all of you about how we are all here to "make a difference" and to protect society from those who would prey on the defenseless.

I could also say that in all those years I have asked myself, "Why do I do this every day?"

Sometimes it's hard to remember why. Some days it is tough to get motivated, to go to work and face the day and the challenges it brings. Those challenges are not just from "offenders." They are also from the same people that are supposed to have our back. Challenges from co-workers, from management, from the very people we work for.

I am sure that everyone in this room at one time or another has experienced the frustration at seemingly being the only "warrior" that has a clear picture of what the mission seems to be when talking about dealing with adult offenders in the criminal justice system.

We are expected to demonstrate worthwhile virtues of dedication, compassion, perseverance and integrity. We are supposed to give unselfishly of our time, talent, expertise and energies to causes that enrich the lives of others. We are expected to inspire leadership and professional standards. We are expected to earn the respect and praise of our fellow workers and the community.

Are we happy with those expectations?

There are many times that we don't see those same virtues in others that judge our performance.

For me, the 35 years in this arena has been challenging, disappointing, rewarding and very blessed. Contradictions.

Life is full of contradictions.... When I began my "career" at Luzerne County in the Court Administrator's Office in 1980, I thought I knew what I wanted to do. I didn't think I had the discipline to be an attorney, but I wanted to do more than arrest people. I thought probation and parole was a good avenue to be able to use my education and to genuinely be of service to my community and to maybe make a difference.

I grew up "under the dome" (the Courthouse) in Wilkes Barre. From being the first female PO—a great opportunity, to Adult Probation Supervisor, to Domestic Relations Supervisor, and then back to Probation Services to supervise the Administrative Services and Court Collections Division. It has been quite a ride.

I've dealt with many obstacles, much resistance and many personalities. Offenders, co-workers and administrators. The most important thing in all of this was making sure that what I worked so hard for—what I devoted my life to— was not being taken for granted by anyone, including myself.

I made a promise to myself in the early days that what I had to offer was meaningful, that I would make that difference.

To a certain extent, it is a thankless job. No fanfare. People expect us to transform people's lives. Tall order, isn't it? There are many "war stories" I could tell from the last 35 years.... I'm sure you all have many stories too. Every day is an adventure and an opportunity. We benefit from it, dare it, confront it, and overcome it.

Rewards are found in small ways: a "thank you" from a victim for getting \$20.00 from an offender who owes thousands; an appreciative co-worker who needs some guidance or a few kind words to make it through the day; the firmness needed to ensure offender compliance with conditions of supervision; the look you receive from a child when you give them a lollipop when they visit with a parent who is an offender.

Sometimes the powers that be don't necessarily know what we actually do. We strive to perform our very best in all things. We know that our performance reflects on the Court or the boss. A tremendous job is

taken for granted. Sometimes we don't know what we are supposed to do. Non-reaction from supervisors can change anyone's attitude. It is difficult to stay motivated and aware that we are capable and competent in what we do. We at times can empathize with offenders regarding the need for validation.

What I have found is that every person in this world wants the same things in life. Stable relationships, a stable home life, a means of support, and a direction for their dreams. We want to be validated.

We are given this life because we are strong enough to live it. Sometimes we face difficulties not because we are doing something wrong, but because we are doing something right. Being strong is sometimes the only choice we have.

Our duties within the criminal justice system are important for many reasons in addition to protecting society, and re-integrating offenders in order for them to become productive members of society.

If you think about why you are in this business rather than making a pile of money somewhere else, what would you say? I would like to think that we are special people, and that we are attempting to make a difference—to shine a light on a new journey for the offenders we supervise—to be an example of what good lies in each of us.

Albert Schweitzer had some insight to share with us: "At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us." I am sure that we all have someone who has ignited that flame. Be thankful for it. As we go through life, hopefully we have ignited the flame for others, be it our family, friends and even the offenders we supervise.

Remember the people on your journey, those who mentored you, those who affected you, those who gave you the mirror to look at yourself. Two of my mentors, former Board members, were an integral part of my development in being the kind of person I wanted to be in this business. Supervisor training and many deep conversations over the years have helped me focus on the reasons for my being in this profession. To this day, they still provide me with insight and support, even though they are both technically "retired." They taught me that self-evaluation is always a good thing. We evaluate others, but rarely do we reflect on ourselves.

My advice to anyone in this business is, when you think that you can't make a difference, remember that it only takes one raindrop to raise the ocean. As Maya Angelou once said: "I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but few people will ever forget how you made them feel." This is what character is all about. We continue through life—working on our character. We are never finished until we meet the Big Guy. Every day we learn new things ... about ourselves.

I hope that I have “done right by everybody” and that I have proven to be a “light” that shines brightly for them. I have tried to give everyone the tools to get the job done and to share burdens. We stand side-by-side at the probation office to accomplish our mission. We do not stand alone—ever. We celebrate each other’s good fortune and help bear each other’s tragedies. We impact each other.

The power of going outside yourself and appreciating others means so very much. Remember where you came from, for any success in life lies on the shoulders of those who came before you, those who supported you, those who ignited the flame for you. I hope that everyone here remembers those who stand by us every day, supporting us in every aspect of our lives. They too make an impact.

For those of you who are supervisors, chiefs or directors, it is up to you to remember that humility is a good thing. Your success lies with those people who get the job done, those who are in the trenches every day. The people who get their hands dirty, who dig the ditches and sometimes have to use the plunger. Of course, you have to look in the mirror too. Having a conscience is part of that character building. Having a positive impact is where we should set our sights.

Today I also thank my family for keeping me grounded and to remind me of what is important in life. Remember that your family is there always ... love and cherish every waking moment with those you love. Don’t blink your eyes as life is fleeting.

I thank God for all my opportunities and challenges as they have given me a better understanding of others, for it is in service that we will attain great rewards.

After 35 years, I would do it all over again. I still have something to offer. Experience is an excellent teacher. Sharing life’s lessons is something you won’t find in the books. Trust your gut, and remember that not everyone has had the same opportunities in life. Sometimes we need to extend a hand. We may not always get a positive response, but nevertheless we keep trying. We do make an impact.

I wish the best of everything to all of you, be safe always, and remember that while some days may seem uneventful, you would be surprised about the impact you have. Use every day as an opportunity to make that impact.

# WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH – PART 3

BY CATERINA SPINARIS, PHD, LPC AND DARIA MAYOTTE, MA

What are some key strategies for promoting staff resilience in correctional environments?

Effective approaches for fostering staff resilience in correctional agencies are two-pronged, involving strategies that target the areas of both *prevention* and *intervention* programming and resources.

## What Is Involved in Prevention?

At both the bottom-up (individual) and horizontal (work-team) levels, prevention methods are inoculation-type, long-term approaches, where strategies are taught and skills are trained *before* high-stress workplace events happen. Prevention includes adopting habitual health-promoting behaviors that foster health and wellness, and practicing values that promote a positive culture, with the goal being to neutralize the negative consequences of stressors. At the bottom-up (individual) level, prevention strategies include teaching staff ways of thinking that counter negativity and boost optimism and ways to tend to one's physical, psychological, and spiritual health. For example, staff may be taught to correct thinking distortions (Burns, 1980) that lead to emotional distress, or engage in meditation or gratitude practices to promote self-regulation. At the horizontal (work-team) level, prevention strategies include teaching staff positive values, interpersonal skills, such as communication and conflict management, and educating staff on the impact of social support on health. Such values include the Big 7 values promoted in Desert Waters' course "From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™." At the top-down (administrator) level, prevention includes training administrators to implement positive and supportive leadership practices (Cameron, 2012), wellness-promoting policies, provision of appropriate resources, and advocacy for staff wellness at legislative and other government levels.

## What is Involved in Intervention?

Intervention methods, on the other hand, involve strategies to counter the negative consequences of high-stress events and promote wellness *following* exposure to them—that is, *after* a high-stress incident (Everly & Mitchell, 1997). Such strategies may be rather brief and may be implemented in the short term, but they work best when they are based on wrap-around efforts to offer staff support and promote positive workforce cultures that protect staff's psychological safety (Everly Mitchell, 1997). Interventions are easier to engage in if the groundwork has already been laid to some degree through long-term and customary resilience-promoting behaviors. Intervention methods also include the use of appropriate resources, such as treatment options that are corrections-specific, affordable, adequate, sufficient, and easily accessible.

Prevention and intervention strategies can be likened to two mechanisms one might use for withstanding a torrential rainstorm. Raincoats, hats, and umbrellas are intended to keep one dry (prevention). Yet, if the storm is significant enough, one will get wet anyway, despite the protective gear. As a result, towels, hairdryers, and clothes dryers will be necessary afterward (intervention). Both prevention and intervention have necessary functions and will be needed independently or simultaneously at times, depending on the circumstances. Correctional staff, and by extension their agencies, will benefit from the ongoing incorporation of both prevention strategies as well as intervention strategies in the effort to boost resilience.

*To be continued in the next issue of the Correctional Oasis.*

### **References**

- Burns, D. (1980). *Feeling Good: The New Mood Therapy*. William Morrow and Company.
- Everly, Jr., G. S., & Mitchell, J. T. (1997). The Scientific Evidence for Critical Incident Stress Management. *Journal of Emergency Medical Services, 22*, 86-93.

# QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Often when you think you're  
at the end of something,  
you're at the beginning of  
something else."

Fred Rogers



# IN MEMORIAM

**Robert Boom**

Correction Officer  
New York City Department of Correction  
Died on duty

**Arturo Luis Garcia**

Corrections Officer  
California Department of  
Corrections and Rehabilitation

**Aureon Shavea Grace**

Food Service Worker  
Georgia Department of Corrections  
Murdered by an incarcerated person

**Davis Martinez**

Parole Officer  
Maryland Department of Public Safety  
and Correctional Services  
Murdered by a violent sex  
offender he was supervising

# MEET THE CORRECTIONAL OASIS TEAM



**CATERINA SPINARIS, PH.D., LPC**  
Founding Director

CONTENT CURATION, PRODUCTION & EDITING



**DARIA MAYOTTE, M.A.**  
Deputy Director, Director of Training

CONTENT DEVELOPMENT, EDITING



**JUDY MYERS, B.SC.**  
Executive Assistant

EDITING



**STEVEN MAYOTTE, B.DES., LEED AP**  
Operations & Systems Advisor

GRAPHIC DESIGN & LAYOUT

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in the Correctional Oasis are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views and opinions held by DWCO Board members, staff, and/or volunteers. DWCO is not responsible for accuracy of statements made by authors. If you have a complaint about something you have read in the Correctional Oasis, please contact us.

## Mission

Advancing the well-being of correctional and other public safety staff and their families, and the health of correctional and other public safety agencies, through data-driven, skill-based training

[admin@desertwaters.com](mailto:admin@desertwaters.com)  
[desertwaters.com](http://desertwaters.com)  
(719) 784-4727

Donate

Your donations are tax-deductible.

Desert Waters Correctional Outreach is a non-profit corporation which helps correctional and other public safety agencies counter Corrections Fatigue in their staff by cultivating a healthier workplace climate and a more engaged workforce through targeted skill-based training and research.

*All images are stock images or are presented with permission of the author.*



**DESERT WATERS**  
CORRECTIONAL OUTREACH