

Happenings

Minnesota Community Corrections Association

Eden director seeks state office

Dan Cain, former board member and vice-chair of MCCA, is running for election as a State Representative in Northwestern Hennepin County. Cain, executive director of Eden Program, has a 20-year history of working in corrections and chemical dependency. Beginning as a counselor at Eden House in 1973, Cain has worked his way up in the organization and now administrates six substance abuse treatment and prevention programs. From 1982 until 1991, Cain served on the MN Sentencing Guidelines Commission, acting as Chair for the last five years. From 1988 until 1992, he also chaired the Hennepin County Corrections Advisory Board. In 1991, Cain was honored with both the Jack Young Award for Excellence in Corrections, from the Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties, and the Corrections Person of the Year award, from the Minnesota Corrections Association.

When asked why he is seeking elective office, Cain cited several reasons, "The short answer is, I was angry over the way Governor Carlson handled appointments to the Guidelines Commission. We were nearly through with a project to set objective standards for determining presumptive sentences which, if successful, would have gone a long way toward limiting the influence of political grandstanding on sentencing practice. By eliminating five Commission members, then changing leadership twice in four months, completion of that project was set back at least two years. I guess I whined too

much, because someone suggested that, if I was so angry, I should do something about it and offered to support my candidacy."

"But long before I was 'unappointed,' I was concerned with the direction our leadership was taking us. Politicians seemed more interested in creating illusion than doing things of substance. And that practice scares the hell out of me. Nowhere was it more apparent than when we asked people to 'Just Say No' to drugs and crime, but systematically reduced opportunities to which they could say 'Yes'. Dollars for enforcement and 'bricks and mortar' projects were increasing, but dollars for prevention and community reintegration seemed to decrease proportionately. Elected officials were asking to spend \$100,000 of my tax dollars to incarcerate someone for four years who possessed two days' dosage of cocaine. At the same time, they reduced by 25% resources to help that person get off of drugs. Then, to access the 75% that was left, they created a cumbersome, costly, bureaucratic process that further reduced dollars spent directly on client services. Call me a cynic, but I still believe in government for the people, not government for the sake of government."

Cain's district, 33B, includes parts of Maple Grove and Plymouth. He is endorsed by the DFL, the AFL-CIO, the Teamsters, AFSCME, MAPE, the UAW, the IBEW, the DFL Feminist Caucus, Minnesota NARAL, the Hennepin County Women's Political Caucus, the DFL-LGC, and ADA. If elected, Cain will continue at Eden Programs, but take a leave during the Legislative session. In closing, Dan said, "I don't know how much

difference one person can make, but trying to change things from the outside sometimes feels like swimming upstream. Hopefully I can convince people to re-think the direction we have been going and work to become more rational and less reactionary."

Pardon's board update

Although 83% of all pardon requests filed in Minnesota since 1983 have been granted, only 15 people, out of an initial group of 50 petitioners, met with success when the state Board of Pardons met on August 26, 1992.

These figures confirm the observation that pardons are getting hard to come by, as the criminal justice system reacts to public outrage over a spate of crimes by repeat offenders. But the figures do not tell the whole story, since a pardon no longer affords the former offender the anonymity which it once did.

In fact, according to Chief Justice A. M. (Sandy) Keith of the Minnesota Supreme Court, who sits on the Pardons Board, the Board recently implemented guidelines even stronger than those recommended by a commission which was appointed in the wake of a critical I-Team report.

Under the new guidelines, petitions from convicted felons or misdemeanants may not even be considered by the Board unless five years have elapsed since the expiration of sentence on a property offense, while individuals convicted of crimes against persons must wait at least ten years after expiration before their applications may be considered. Should the Board wish to consider a petition which fails to meet

these criteria, it must provide a written explanation for the departure.

The Board has also opened up the decision-making process to provide for input from victims and prosecutors (in addition to judges, whose opinions were always solicited) and has eliminated a provision instituted in 1972 which sealed the records of those who received pardons. Moreover, the Board's meetings have been opened up to public scrutiny (complete with reporters and news cameras), so that any interested party may watch the proceedings.

Since a public notice of any petition filed with the Board must be published in the newspaper in the county where the original offense occurred, there is no longer any anonymity associated with an individual's attempt to obtain a pardon - a fact which has caused consternation to some petitioners whose families are unaware of their pasts, but which provides assurances that the community's interests will be served.

In addition, petitioners who have resided outside the state at any time since their release must sign a waiver allowing the Board to conduct a record check in any jurisdiction where they lived, in addition to the standard BCA check.

Convicted felons or misdemeanants who are willing to permit such scrutiny must prepare petitions, with or without the assistance of an attorney, setting forth their reasons for requesting a pardon. Since a felony conviction bars one from being bonded, from pursuing certain professions (such as nursing or law enforcement), or from conducting certain types of businesses (such as selling firearms), there are often very practical reasons. In other cases, the individual may simply be motivated to have a blemish removed from his or her record.

While previous practice made it impossible, absent a court order, for prosecutors to access a defendant's criminal record once he had received a pardon, the new rules provide only for the addition of the pardon to the record, with no expungement of prior convictions. This permits an individual to permit career goals while still permitting law enforcement authorities to establish patterns and to accurately

calculate criminal history scores.

Although many states vest the power to issue pardons in the office of the governor, Minnesota vests that authority in a panel consisting of the governor, the state's attorney general, and the chief justice of the state supreme court - whose unanimous consent is required to enter a pardon on the record.

In addition to the usual pardon, called a "pardon extraordinary," there are two alternative forms of relief: a full pardon and a sentence commutation, which are rarely granted.

A review of the petitions submitted to the Board prior to its most recent meeting indicated that 49 were submitted by property offenders and that 47 of the 50 petitioners were men. The sole petition from a convicted murderer was denied.

•Ronnie Bouma

Kaplan appointed to Board of psychology

In June 1992, Governor Arne Carlson appointed Jerry Kaplan to serve a four-year term on the Minnesota Board of Psychology. Jerry, who has been the director of Alpha House for the past 15 years, also currently serves as a member of the Hennepin County Corrections Advisory Board and as a member of the Department of Corrections Advisory Board that is formulating the licensing of adult residential and outpatient programs for sex offenders.

Jerry's appointment to the Board of Psychology is unique in that he is the only member in recent memory who comes from a predominantly corrections background. The Board is the regulatory body for the practice of psychology in Minnesota, and Board members are responsible for the licensing of new practitioners, renewing the licenses of current practitioners, disciplining psychologists, setting testing procedures and promulgating the general rules of the profession. We extend our congratulations to Jerry on this prestigious appointment and to the Governor on his good judgment!

More news from Alpha House

As of August of this year, Alpha House has incorporated the St. Paul-based Phase program for adolescent sex offenders. Phase will continue to be directed by Michael O'Brien with no staff or program changes anticipated. Phase has relocated to the Spruce Tree Center, 1600 University Avenue West, Suite 305, phone: 641-1485, and also continues to operate its Brooklyn Park facility, phone: 566-2847. Alpha adult outpatient staff will begin making limited use of these facilities, which will mark the beginning of their operating presence in St. Paul and Ramsey County.

In other Alpha news, Sam Albert, Ph.D., was recently given the position of director of their burgeoning adult outpatient program. Dr. Albert, formerly a forensic psychologist for the Anoka County criminal court, is in private practice in addition to his other duties as Alpha's research director. Dr. Albert will oversee an impressive staff of outpatient group therapists, which includes Owen Nelson, former chief psychologist for Hennepin County; Skye Payne, director of the Five County Mental Health Center's sex offender treatment program; Jim Ayres, director of the Walk-In Counseling Center; Robin Goldman, who directs the sex offender treatment program at Stillwater, and many other excellent, experienced therapists too numerous to mention in this space. Alpha now offers outpatient groups for the young adult, the geriatric offender, three groups for the marginally treatable (i.e. low functioning and/or resistive), a pre-treatment/psycho-educational deniers' group, as well as a variety of other traditional sex offender groups.

These groups currently have over 140 offenders enrolled. Dr. Albert's role will be to improve Alpha's outpatient program where needed, begin standardizing certain program components, and generally act as a supervisor/consultant for their staff. If our readers have either questions or suggestions, please direct them to Dr. Albert at Alpha's main office, phone: 872-8218.

Mark your calendars!

The annual MCCA Winter Conference is scheduled for February 4 and 5, 1993, at Wilder Forest. As of yet, a full listing of the Conference's agenda and topics has not been completed. Detailed information regarding the Conference will be available in our next newsletter, which you should receive in December.

Jo Ausen (348-9239) and Louise Wolfgramm (348-8570) are chairing the nominations committee for the six positions that need to be filled for our Board of Directors.

Sharen Southard (348-3974) and Kris Clendenen (659-9166) are co-chairing the Conference Committee. Please call them with any questions or suggestions. Nominations for the Robert H. Robinson Award must be submitted prior to 1/20/93. Mail in your nomination or fax it to (612) 348-6782.

Men and violence: from being hurt to hurting

Editor's Note: The following article appeared as the lead editorial in the Star Tribune on 10/7/92 and is reprinted here with permission.

Governor Arne Carlson has designated this Violence Free Minnesota Week and called for changes in attitudes that lead to violent behavior. To advance that worthwhile effort, herewith a controversial proposition: Among attitudes most in need of change are those which overlook violence directed at boys and men and thus inadvertently encourage violence from boys and men.

Accept two stipulations: First, the sexual violence visited on girls and women by men must be fought with all the vigor society can muster. Second, the male of the human species is almost exclusively the agent of violence.

That male propensity for violence results partly from biology, but partly from the training boys receive from their

earliest days — with the generalized concurrence of the female of the species. To put it bluntly, in war and in peace boys and men have long been cannon fodder.

They still are. The familiar lament that some brutalizer somewhere in the world has killed "even" women and children implies that killing men is less intolerable. That implication is evident on a Twin Cities anti-crime billboard protesting the "killing of women and children." In 1991, Minnesota police agencies recorded 122 murders. Almost all the murders were committed by men. Of the victims, 34 were women and 88 were men.

Often it is said that men can't grasp the fear of rape and assault which robs women of the freedom to move at will in their yards, neighborhoods, and cities. Undoubtedly that's true, but most men have lived with something similar. Were men not commonly coached into emotional constipation, all the better to serve as cannon fodder, many could recall the fear they experienced beginning at about age 10, lasting at least through high school and reinforced during service in the armed forces. The socialization of young men involves confrontation with bullies and worse who threaten, and often try, to damage body and soul.

Most of the men who hurt others come from the large pool of boys and men who are hurt and trained not to feel. The focus on sexual violence is urgently needed. But a society which declines also to focus on violence in the lives of men and boys, or which draws arbitrary distinctions between that and violence inflicted on women and children, hasn't a prayer of becoming violence free.

Applying quality improvement principles to crime and justice

Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the August/September 1989 edition of Judicature, the journal of the American Judicature Society, and is reprinted here with their permission.

In recent years much attention and

concern has focused on the declining competitiveness of American industry. A number of well-known quality improvement gurus have outlined steps to reverse the decline. Several of the key principles of quality improvement have been codified by Deming in his 14 principles for management. Such ideas as working closely with suppliers, improving processes, reducing inspection, eliminating scrap and rework, and lowering inventories are central to most quality improvement efforts. These ideas have begun to be understood in many different types of industries. All over North America there are examples of their application in service industries, the government, and even the military. What has not been well understood is that these same principles can dramatically impact the issue of crime in America.

Crime in the U.S. has been described as a system out of control. There are increasing reports of drugs, murders and violent crimes in almost every city. In 1985 there were more than 1.9 million arrests for serious crimes in the U.S. There were more than 18,000 arrests for murder, 36,000 for forcible rape, and more than 300,000 for aggravated assaults. And these numbers represent only the arrests, which may be just the tip of the iceberg.

However, the figures on violent crimes do not tell the whole story. In addition to these crimes, there were another 9 million arrests for crimes ranging from arson to vagrancy and vandalism. There were more than 900 convictions of elected public officials for public corruption, one million reported cases of child abuse, and nearly \$70 billion lost due to shoplifting and employee theft. Our prisons are overloaded, the courts are backlogged with cases pending disposition, and the police are outmanned and outgunned in the "war on crime."

People who were formerly "soft" on crime are converting to more "hardcore" positions on capital punishment, sentencing, rehabilitation, prison reform, and police responsibilities. More and more states are attempting to restore or institute capital punishment. Many citizens are arming themselves with assault rifles, and security companies

are doing a booming business.

The tragic irony is that the system is not really out of control. In fact, by most definitions of process control, it may be argued that the system is in a pretty good state of control. If by control one means that a system is predictable, then our crime system in the U.S. is seemingly very much in control.

The problem is not that the system is out of control, but rather that no one understands the process. There is almost total ignorance of what causes crime in America. And where there is an understanding, no one will take responsibility for the process. Instead, we resort to the same strategies and practices that brought American industry to the brink of catastrophe. Building more prisons (warehouses) and hiring more police and guards (inspectors) will not decrease the crime rate. These practices do nothing to improve the process. By using metaphors derived from quality improvement terminology, I will explain how the crime system in the U.S. is forfeiting any real ability to deal with crime.

The crime system

The U.S. system of crime prevention is based on the assumption that one catches criminals via the police. The police (incoming inspectors) temporarily warehouse these potential defects (I will use the term defects in place of the term criminals). Of course, warehousing costs money as does incoming inspection and adds nothing to the process. One could argue for working more closely with suppliers to reduce incoming defects.

Subsequent to the first warehousing, the defects are shipped to the courtroom for a second inspection (in some cases, there will eventually be a third, fourth and fifth inspection). Depending on the evidence, bias and disposition of the data and inspectors, the defects will either be set free (shipped back to society) or sent to prison (warehousing) for incarceration, rehabilitation, or death. Incarceration means to be stockpiled in a very expensive warehouse. Rehabilitation involves rework of a more ineffective sort considering the 65 percent recidivism rate of our prisons. The death sentence

is to acknowledge defeat in salvaging the defect; it is the ultimate waste and scrap-pile.

Meanwhile, back in society, efforts to improve the system include: longer sentencing (more warehousing); more police and courts (increased inspection); more capital punishment (increased scrap); and calling out the military to deal with crime. This latter solution is a case of dealing with a special cause as though it were a common cause. Thus, in a futile effort to control crime, society is reduced to a virtual prisoner to increased work standards (curtailment of civil liberties) without ever understanding or taking steps to improve the process. These comparisons are both appropriate and valid. I have spent several years professionally studying the basic fundamentals of quality improvement, and many more years as an amateur criminologist trying to understand the nature and causes of crime in society. Only recently have I realized that the same solutions we are applying to revive American industry will work for our crime system. In fact, they are essential if we are going to reduce the present rate of crime in America.

Reducing crime

We can reduce crime in America if we take the following steps. We must make a commitment to the continuous improvement of our criminal justice system. This does not mean hiring more police, judges and prison guards or building more prisons. We must make a fundamental commitment to understanding the processes that produce crime. We must put our money upstream to improve the process so that we can reduce the percentage of defects produced by the process. We must commit to increased levels of research and development to create new processes that will be 100 per cent defect-free. We must have the constancy of purpose to take action on the "causes" of crime in America and not just deal with the "effects."

The lessons that Deming and others are teaching about quality improvement must be applied to the problem of crime in America. Unless this is done soon, efforts to revive American industry may be for naught. It will do little good to

create more secure jobs and stronger industries if we are afraid to walk the streets of our home towns.

•John Perscio, Jr., is a management consultant at the Process Management Institute in Bloomington, MN .

News from MCA

MN well represented at ACA

Dennis Avery, a past president of MCA, scored a major victory at the American Correctional Association, where he was recently elected Vice-President. His opponent was a past commissioner of corrections from Michigan, a state with over 900 ACA members.

Dennis, Manager for Adult Probation and Parole Supervision in Hennepin County, is no stranger to ACA. He is chair of the ACA Constitution and Bylaws Committee. He previously chaired the Ethics Committee, the Credentials Committee of the Delegate Assembly and represented the Board of Governors on the ACA Executive Committee. Dennis has been appointed to serve as a member of the Coordinating Council for Congress Programs and is also a member of the President's Forum on Issues, the Victims Committee and the Community Corrections Committee. He will continue to be a strong voice for the Midwest in this national corrections forum.

John Poupart, corrections program and policy manager for the Department of Corrections, was also a winner in the past election. He won an At-Large, Ethnic Minority, seat on the Delegate Assembly, running with five other nominees.

Other Minnesotans on the ballot were, Orville Pung (Board of Governors), David Gair (Delegate Assembly), Peter Carlson (Delegate Assembly), Frank Wood (Delegate Assembly) and Thomas Zoet (Delegate Assembly).

Duluth in '94

The MCA Board of Directors has made a bold decision to break tradition and host an MCA Fall Conference outside of the metro area. The October 1994 conference will be held at the

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It's time to clean up toxic waste that pollutes media

Editor's Note: The following article appeared in the Chicago Tribune on 9/17/92 and is reprinted here with permission.

Let's be clear about what's at issue here, without being tagged as Jesse Helmses, Pat Buchanans or Dan Quayles, or gagged as prudes, puritans, or potential censors.

The problem is the increasing, ugly, vicious epidemic of violence, sexual deviance and assault on common decency in the movies, on TV and in pop music. Much of the powerful and pervasive entertainment media is not only losing touch with much of the mainstream audiences, but are attaching their values and contributing to the rising level of violence and social pathology in our society.

The situation has become so widespread and so damaging it must be considered a serious, national public health issue, TV Guide warned last month.

Next month, in a hard-hitting new book, "Hollywood vs.. America" film critic Michael Medved blasts the entertainment industry for its increasing preoccupation with violence and brutality, its hostile undermining of the family and its glorification of promiscuity, foul language and bizarre behavior.

Neither Medved nor TV Guide exaggerates. And Murphy Brown is among the least of the problems.

"More televised violence than at any time in the medium's history is flowing into American homes," notes TV Guide. "It's coming from many more sources than ever before: home video, pay-per-view and cable, as well as from the broadcast networks and stations."

Medved's book is specific almost to the point of nausea in describing the cannibalism, sexual violence against women, casual killings, and antisocial bias so common now in the entertainment industry's products.

Moreover, the messages and the morality of these offerings generally go unquestioned, especially by critics,

Medved points out. Violence seems to be critically acceptable if the brains splatter in an artistic way. Cannibalism can win Oscars if the lighting is well done and the methods imaginatively macabre. Pop lyrics describing incest and sexual brutality usually get a pass if the rap beat is catching and the rape can be equated with racial protest.

Medved talks about the "accumulated impact of irresponsible messages that are repeated hour after hour, year after year. The most significant problems of the popular culture stem from the pervasive presence of antisocial material, not from a few isolated examples of offensiveness."

The public is being desensitized to film violence entertainment, he says. It takes more to shock than it did a decade or two ago. Violence begins to seem acceptable, a behavior norm. So does sex outside of marriage. Outrageous behavior starts to seem routine. Outrageous behavior starts to seem routine. Foul language no longer grates. The entertainment media are giving a legitimacy to sexual and violent behavior that should bother all of us.

Happy marriages are rare in the entertainment media, Medved points out. Illegitimate pregnancy is far more common than weddings. Marriages that do exist are likely to be shown as troubled or nightmarish. Women are often mistreated. Sexual activity is 13 times more likely to be shown as occurring outside of marriage than within.

Five times as many people go to church in a given week as go to the movies, Medved points out. But the entertainment media virtually ignore religion and rarely suggest that actions may have moral motivations.

Medved points out that "more than 3,000 research projects and scientific studies between 1960 and 1992 have confirmed the connection between a steady diet of violent entertainment and aggressive and antisocial behavior.

Depression, fearfulness and feelings of being ineffective and vulnerable in a dangerous world are also associated with heavy watching of violent entertainment, studies show.

TV Guide points out, "the

overwhelming weight of scientific opinion now holds that televised violence is indeed responsible for a percentage of the real violence in our society. What is new is that psychologists, child experts, and the medical community are just now beginning to treat televised violence as a serious public health issue."

Industry spokespersons who say the linkage hasn't been proven are beginning to sound as hollow as the Tobacco Institute trying to wiggle away from all the evidence tying cigarettes to lung cancer.

But it's difficult to deny that violent TV films don't influence behavior when advertisers are charged millions of dollars for a few short commercials on the same programs that they are assured will affect viewers.

Responsible parents can, of course, try to reduce the amount of violence, sexual deviation and smut to which their children are exposed. They can teach their children moral values and better ways to handle conflicts. But that doesn't solve the problem of increasing violence impacting on youngsters whose homes make them more susceptible to such influences.

Schools can help children learn to be critical viewers, to understand the violence is fake and that in real life there are serious consequences to such behavior. But however attractive as an apparent quick fix, official censorship isn't a solution. As Medved point out, it "will always prove counterproductive. As soon as the government attempts to crack down on some purveyor of slime he is quickly transformed into a defender of the 1st Amendment."

It is also unacceptably dangerous to the fabric of American rights and freedoms.

Watchdog groups can help. Boycotts can be effective in rare specific instances. But the movie industry seems indifferent to the reasons why million of adults, who grew up with a fascination for films, rarely go

to see them now. And the TV industry seems to be trying to cope with a steady loss of viewers by churning out more of the same junk. But public opinion is still the most effective and powerful weapon, although it can take

time to energize and mobilize. The public has every right to reject the toxic wastes that are pouring out of the entertainment media. And eventually, those who are producing the pollution will find it unprofitable and impossible to keep on churning out what doesn't sell.

•Joan Beck

Turn off the Violence

Editor's Note: The following article was prepared by the staff of Turn Off the Violence, P.O. Box 27558, Minneapolis, MN. For further information, call their office at (612) 593-8041.

In the spring and summer of 1991, Minnesota experienced a series of highly publicized incidents of violence. In July, two members of the Minnesota Crime Prevention Officers Association were discussing the most recent headlines. They were despairing about what could be done in view of the inadequacy of most traditional crime prevention projects which address violence. One said to the other, "If we could just turn off the violence. If we just had a knob . . . If we could even just get people to turn off violent entertainment, wouldn't that be something!" The discussion led to how ironic it is that Americans are so fascinated with violent television, movies, and music, while at the same time we are so horrified and baffled by rising rates of real-life violence. While some may argue that our media is merely a reflection of real life, we argue that the media is also a teacher.

That conversation was the start of the "Turn Off the Violence" project for the Minnesota Crime Prevention Officers Association (MCPOA). The Minnesota Crime Prevention Officers Association had been researching the potential of creating a state-wide crime prevention coalition since 1990. With the proposal for "Turn Off the Violence" in hand, the MCPOA began phoning others from the dozens of organizations who had an interest in reducing violence. The first meeting was held July 31, 1991 and was attended by 25 participants from a cross-section of law enforcement, education, religious, and social service agencies. These

original sponsors gave their support to Turn Off the Violence and began planning for an awareness campaign to culminate on October 3, 1991, the first "Turn Off the Violence Day."

In the belief that there is a link between violent entertainment and real life violence, we asked Minnesotans to turn off violent entertainment for the day. We also requested families to begin discussing, particularly with their children, ways that conflicts can be solved without the violence that is so often depicted in entertainment as the final solution.

As word-of-mouth and project literature spread, our coalition sponsor list grew to over 45 organizations across three states. Since October 3, 1991 there has been continued communication and networking between agencies that had no previous relationship. Turn Off the Violence has begun a coalition that will continue long into the future, until perhaps, there is no longer a need.

This year, the Turn Off the Violence Coalition has grown to over 60 sponsors and has planned another state-wide public awareness campaign to be celebrated on October 15, 1992, the second Turn Off the Violence Day.

In efforts to create an organized and even more successful campaign in '92, Turn Off the Violence will hold workshops in each of the four quadrants of the state, and two additional workshops in the metropolitan area. These workshops will be conducted with the goal of training people to organize their own local campaigns and events. By building these additional community-based coalitions across the state, it is our hope that you and concerned citizens like you all across Minnesota will take ownership of the project and take pride in working to eliminate violence in your own communities.

Prison joins campaign

A group of inmates at Minnesota Correctional Facility-Lino Lakes participated in Turn off the Violence, a state-wide effort to increase awareness of violence in our lives and of opportunities to choose non-violent

forms of entertainment.

The Lino Lakes fathers' support group, a component of Citizens Council Families in Focus parent education program, decided to bring the campaign inside the prison walls. First, working with the support group facilitator, Shirley Stead, they redesigned the brochure with an A to Z list of alternatives to violence which fit inmate life. Then they organized a variety show for October 15, Turn off the Violence day, to demonstrate their commitment to creating non-violent forms of entertainment.

The variety show, which included rap, comedy, music, and narrated profiles of victims of violence, was planned and organized entirely by inmates with the support of the staff. The brochure developed by the inmate group was distributed to every inmate and staff member at Lino Lakes.

•Kay Pranis

Prairie Correctional Facility update

The Prairie Correctional Facility, private prison located in Appleton, Minnesota, is expected to open (that is, lock its doors) in November. The exact date is uncertain because management wishes to have contracts for 150 to 200 inmates before beginning operations. To honor contracts already signed, some inmates are being held in a sister facility until the Appleton facility opens.

The Prairie Correctional Facility has passed Minnesota Department of Corrections inspection.

The prison is municipally owned, but is operated by a for-profit management firm which is paid a fixed fee for management services. The primary purpose for the prison is economic development for the community of Appleton.

The facility has a capacity of 470 inmates, housed primarily in single cells with a few double cells and a 48-person dorm. Staff are planning for education and chemical dependency treatment programs, but those programs will only be available if the sentencing jurisdiction is willing to pay for them. The facility will be tobacco-free and will provide smoking cessation courses.

Management indicates that diversity training will be provided to staff to assess the possibility of an inmate population which is dramatically different culturally from the staff. In response to a concern about the long distance inmates will be from families, management suggested that the sentencing jurisdiction is responsible for that problem.

It is ironic that small, rural communities find an economic development opportunity as a result of the lack of economic development opportunities for residents of inner cities who make up most of the nation's inmate population. The residents of Appleton are willing to build a prison for economic survival while many of the inmates were willing to risk prison for their economic survival.

•Kay Pranis

A Call for a Rational Debate on Crime and Punishment

** Editor's Note: The Campaign For An Effective Crime Policy, is a national policy and lobbyist organization based in Washington, D.C. Among its national sponsors are the following Minnesotans: Governor, Arne Carlson, The Honorable Douglas Amdahl, former Chief Justice of the Minnesota Supreme Court; Rudy Boschwitz, former U.S. Senator; Anthony Bouza, former Mpls. Police Chief; Jacquelyn Bilcher, President, Mpls. Community College; Mark Carey, Director of Dakota County Community Corrections; Donald Fraser, Mayor of Mpls.; Thomas Foley, Ramsey County Attorney; Richard Erikson, Director of the MN Citizen's Council on Crime & Justice; Orville Pung, Commissioner of Corrections; Rev. John Roach, Archbishop, St. Paul & Mpls.; James Scheibel, Mayor of St. Paul; Kathleen Villenga, Chair, MN House of Representative's Judiciary Committee; Allan H. Spear, Chair of the MN State's Judiciary Committee; and many others too numerous to mention. A mailing insert is enclosed should you wish further information or wish to support this group.*

Crime is a serious problem in the United States. While theories about cause and effect can be argued, there can be no debate about some of the facts.

- The U.S. has the highest rate of crime of any industrialized nation in the world.
- The U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration of any industrialized nation in the world.
- The cost of the criminal justice system, sustained mostly by state and local governments, has soared over the last decade and now threatens the ability to deliver many basic services.

Society will always need to incarcerate those who endanger the community; but for certain offenders, it is time to consider possibilities that already exist, cost less than prison, and hold offenders accountable for their crimes. Too often sentencing practices, laws, and prison release policies needlessly hold offenders in prison, sometimes for long terms, when community-based alternatives would safely serve society's interest in punishment.

We the undersigned recognize the extent to which crime degrades the lives of Americans. We believe that a wider network of intermediate sanctions is needed to create opportunities for offenders to repay their victims and their communities. And we believe that such sanctions could be used to control and rehabilitate offenders who would otherwise be incarcerated at great expense.

The unprecedented growth in the nation's prison population over the last decade has placed a heavy burden on taxpayers to build, maintain, and operate prisons and jails. There have also been high costs associated with the disintegration of the families left behind. We are approaching — and, in some cases, have passed — the point at which it is productive to invest in expanding our prison systems.

In this election year, we urge all candidates to refrain from politicizing crime and punishment policy. Appeals to base human instincts and demagoguery will ultimately make the problem worse. We call on candidates for political office to engage in an

informed debate about effective responses to the problem and to avoid advocating simple and quick-fix solutions.

What is this thing called cultural diversity?

In the Fall of 1991, Michael Cunniff, Director of the Hennepin County Bureau of Community Corrections, appointed a task force of eight staff members to develop recommendations that would lead to the Bureau becoming more culturally diverse in staff composition and more culturally sensitive in its policies, interaction with clients, and response to the general community. The recommendations made in September, 1992 covered the areas of leadership and communication, recruitment and hiring, staff development (training) and retention, and client relations and services. Also recommended was the appointment of an ongoing committee on cultural diversity to advise the director on matters of policy, practice and training.

The following comments come from a portion of the task force's work in defining cultural diversity:

Recently, with all the emphasis on cultural diversity, one wonders what it all means. Is this just another in a series of "social fads," or one of those "politically correct" things we are supposed to do?

In a nutshell, cultural diversity relates to all of us, with all of the things that seem to make us "different" from one another. Diversity includes race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical ability, mental capacity, economic status, religion, physical appearance, education, literacy, employment status/career, regional identity, nationality, marital status, language, citizenship status, political philosophy, organizational level, etc.

In corrections, all of these "diversities" come into play with our clients and with other staff. Between 50 and 65 percent of the clients with whom the corrections' staff work in the Metro area are Afro-American, Native American, Chicano/Latino, and Asian, i.e. minorities. This represents at least

twice the percentage which those groups are constituted within the general population. Slowly our staffs are becoming more diverse in respect to women and minorities.

One issue for staff and agencies is the myth, often unconsciously held, that the sole reason for the high percentage of minority criminals/delinquents is that it is mostly minorities who commit the crimes. The media fills our lives with that perception on a daily basis. The issue of racial selectivity occurs in all parts of the criminal justice system, as well as in the wider community.

Another issue in diversity is the tendency to look at cultural differences negatively: "that's not the way I do my hair, wear my hat or speak," therefore, it's "not right." When applied to people of color or gays or those who are poor, it takes on a pejorative or discriminatory quality. When this occurs behaviorally with corrections clients, the effects can be far more destructive.

There are more things that all people have in common than in opposition, and are the parts of life that people can

mutually build upon. Respecting diversity helps us create better relationships among ourselves and more effective services with clients.

•Rich Wheaton, Training Coordinator, Hennepin County Community Corrections

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