



# Commissioner's CORNER

"To Protect the Public by Incarcerating and Supervising Offenders"

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## **WELCOME TO THE COMMISSIONER'S CORNER:**

Thanks for continuing to check in with this column. If you have ideas, issues or suggestions from institutions or field offices, please submit them to [Richard Schmitz@correct.state.ak.us](mailto:Richard_Schmitz@correct.state.ak.us) or call 465 4640.

## **MAT-SU BOROUGH ASSEMBLY OK'S POINT MAC PRISON SITE:**

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough Assembly in mid-January voted unanimously to approve Point Mackenzie as the site for the state's new large prison. Sutton was approved as a back-up site. Next, engineers will undertake a detailed analysis of the approved site to make sure it meets physical requirements for Alaska's newest and largest prison.

### **Right:**

Before their vote, members of the Mat-Su Borough Assembly – along with the media – tour the Anchorage Complex and Hiland Mountain CC. Sup't Marshall (center) leads the tour of Hiland Mountain.



■ [Read the Borough's press release](#)

**25<sup>th</sup> LEGISLATURE TAKES A CLOSE LOOK AT CORRECTIONS:**

The 60 members of the Alaska Legislature have gavelled into session in Juneau. For the next few weeks I, along with Deputy Commissioners Dwayne Peeples and Sam Edwards and Administrative Services Director Shar Griffin, will spend a lot of time getting to know these 40 House members and 20 Senators. This week we're presenting an overview of the department, and answering – or preparing to answer -- their many well-thought-out questions. This department overview begins with a statement of the Department's mission (to protect the public) and continues with work in progress, goals and challenges.



**Annual tour of Lemon Creek for legislator, staff:** Legislative staffers engage in question-and-answer dialogue with Commissioner Joe Schmidt while touring Lemon Creek Correctional Center in Juneau.

**COMMISSIONER MEETS YUKON TERRITORY JUSTICE MINISTER :**

Yukon Justice Minister Marian Horne, participating in a government exchange program with Alaska legislators, met with Commissioner Schmidt to discuss the territory's plan for a new prison in Whitehorse. The commissioner was able to connect the minister with Mat-Su Borough officials involved with the site selection process.

## ■ Yukon prison redevelopment

### **PCC's TRANSFORMATIONAL LIVING COMMUNITY GRADUATES SIX:**

Six residents of the Transformational Living Community graduated from the program in a ceremony at the chapel at Palmer (Medium) Correctional Center on January 22. The event included Superintendent Cindy Betts, PCC staff members, all TLC residents and community mentors. Some of the residents performed an assortment of worship music and several shared their personal story of change. After the ceremony cake and ice cream was served.

“Each resident had successfully completed 18 months of rigorous work in the program focusing on significant behavioral change through God’s empowerment,” explained Chaplain Mike Enschede.

PCC's TLC is a faith-based residential therapeutic program occupying one housing unit with 34 beds. All residents volunteer for the program. During the program the residents live together in a positive



and supportive environment embracing high levels of accountability and personal responsibility for their behaviors. During the program the residents attend many classes focused on core issues in their lives and participate in many peer groups and individual counseling with staff. The TLC program is funded from private sector resources.

“Of those who have completed the program and returned to the community, only 11% have committed new crimes and a mere 11% have been returned to custody for probation/parole revocations,” Enschede said.

## **WILDWOOD HOSTS KAIROS PRISON MINISTRY CONFERENCE:**

After about a year of planning and coordinating through the Chaplaincy office, the first Kairos Weekend was conducted at the Wildwood Correctional Center January 18-21.

Kairos Prison Ministry is an international program which conducts a highly structured lay program designed specifically for correctional institutions. Their mission is to bring Christ's love and forgiveness to incarcerated individuals and their families, and to assist the incarcerated in their transition to becoming a productive citizen.

The Kairos program starts with a 40 hour intensive weekend event which allows the participants to witness Christ's love through the servitude of Kairos volunteers. During the event, participants are given the opportunity to experience a religious renewal accepting God's call to a life of Christian witness and service to one another during their stay in the institution and beyond. After the weekend, participants are encouraged to establish strong Christian communities within their institution.

Close to 42 prisoners participated in the Wildwood event along with just over 50 volunteers from Alaska, Texas, and Oklahoma. All the meals for the prisoner participants, staff, and volunteers during the event were prepared by outside volunteers in the community along with 700 dozen homemade cookies. Volunteer Karolann Whetsell from Kenai served as the Ad Hoc Chairperson, coordinating the entire event.



“I want to personally thank the Wildwood staff for their outstanding cooperation and support of the Kairos event. The scope of this program will likely have a positive effect on the entire facility for months. It was a great success,” said Chaplain Mike Ensch.

The Chaplaincy office usually schedules two Kairos weekends per year at the CCA facility in Arizona and Hiland Mountain Correctional Center. There has been one weekend so far at Palmer Correctional Center. The Kairos organization generates its own funding for these weekend events.

**EMPLOYMENT UPDATE:** Employment statistics for December 2006 and January 2007:

	Correctional Officers	Probation Officers
Conditional Offers	29	0
New Hires	27	4
Transfers In	5	0
Promotions	4	1
Resignations	8	0
Retirements	4	1