



Commissioner's CORNER

"To Protect the Public by Incarcerating and Supervising Offenders"

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COMMISSIONER, DOC



A report by COMMISSIONER JOE SCHMIDT
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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 for the Commissioner's Corner, please submit them to Richard_Schmitz@correct.state.ak.us or call 465 4640.

" ... I was also impressed with the enormity of the responsibilities and challenges that you and your staff deal with every day. The Alaskan public owes the employees of our prison system a debt of gratitude ..."

-- Rep. Andrea Doll in a letter to Sup't Scott Wellard, thanking him for a tour of the facility.

DOC BRINGS BUDGET REQUESTS TO LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEES:

Commissioner Joe Schmidt, Deputy Commissioner Dwayne Peeples and Director Shar Griffin have spent many hours in front of House and Senate finance subcommittees as well as the full finance committees. One representative put it clearly: "... Ask for what you need and manage what you ask for."

"We have received both tough questions and support from the legislature," the Commissioner said. "Our commitment is to manage our allocated resources and be accountable to the public. Our message was received by the legislature, and our goal is to honor this commitment."

Our population management plan calls for 900 prisoners to reside in Arizona through FY08. Two questions arise: Where will 350 prisoners go? And, where will an additional 200 go as our system grows?

To meet this challenge, the Department will increase its use of CRC beds and electronic monitoring. In addition, the Department is requesting funding for alternative portable housing. It is projected that 215 Arizona prisoners will release in 2008. These inmates won't be replaced. In addition, there will be a second look at furlough possibilities.

COMMISSIONER IN OPEN DIALOGUE WITH AFN BOARD:

Commissioner Joe Schmidt, below left, joins Governor Sarah Palin, below right, at a mid-February meeting with the board of the [Alaska Federation of Natives](#) at Juneau's Centennial Hall. The meeting was set up to allow the board to meet a number of newly-appointed commissioners. The commissioner acknowledged the high percentage of inmates who are Alaska Native and committed to work with the board in future efforts to improve this statistic. Also pictured: Commerce Commissioner Emil Notti (center) and Education Commissioner Roger Sampson.



BB/BS PROGRAM SEEKS TO MENTOR CHILDREN OF INMATES: It's often said that the children of inmates are the hidden victims of crime. It's also known that these children of incarcerated parents are more likely to go to prison as an adult. To address this matter, Commissioner Joe Schmidt, Chaplain Mike Ensich and LCCC Superintendent Scott Wellard met with the directors of [Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Alaska](#) in order to explore new opportunities for mentoring children of inmates. Through its [Amachi Program](#), BBBS is reaching these young people (littles) and matching them with carefully-screened adult mentors (bigs). "This was a great opportunity to learn about a proven and valuable program," the Commissioner said. "We're going to look for new opportunities to present this program to incarcerated parents."

HILAND MOUNTAIN INMATES, STAFF CARE FOR IDITAROD DOGS:



Staff and inmates at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center continued their 33 year tradition of sheltering and caring for sled dogs dropped from the Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race. Supervisory staff explained that as many as 100 dogs have been set up in the straw-covered yard of the department's women's prison in Eagle River. The dog population varies greatly, however, as mushers return from the trail and collect their dogs. This year around 31 minimum-custody inmate volunteers worked in teams to care for the dogs with attention, food, water and clean straw bedding. The program began in 1974 under the direction of then deputy superintendent Dan Reynolds, who was also a dog musher.

ANVIL MOUNTAIN INMATES DONATE HATS, SOCKS TO ELDERS:

Bruce Klein, Director of Nome Community Center (right) was presented with 20 pairs of knitted socks and four fur hats donated by the inmates at Anvil Mtn. Correctional Center by Howard Appel, the facility's Education Coordinator in January. The female inmates knitted the socks over the past year.



The male inmates made the fur hats as part of a skin sewing class. These donations will be given to the elders to make their lives warmer this winter. An additional eight fur hats are currently being sewn for other elders in our region. The inmates were excited about the opportunity to make something for the elders and took pride in making the hats and socks. In addition to having the opportunity to give something back to the community, the inmates are learning a marketable skill or hobby. The Nome Community Center manages many senior programs in Nome and the surrounding regional villages.

DOC REMEMBERS REG. 1 CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER JAMES GAY:



With great sadness DOC staff learned of the passing of James Gay. James passed away quietly with his family at his side. His family wants to thank you all for the words of encouragement, phone calls, visits and prayers these last three months. Services were held on March 10. James and his wife Jackie are pictured. If you'd like to send a card or letter of

remembrance to Jackie, her address is: Mrs. James Gay 3935 Young Street Anchorage, AK 99508



WILLOW FINDS SAFE HAVEN AT POINT MAC CF:

Under an ongoing partnership with the Mat Su Borough, abandoned horse Willow is brought to the Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm for temporary shelter. Animal Control staffer Mark Whisenhut leads Willow from the trailer. This winter, the correctional farm has provided safe sanctuary for three other horses: Fancy, Romeo and Sitka. Once deemed healthy, the horses are returned to the borough for auction to the public.

DOC BEGINS ELECTRONIC MONITORING PROGRAM IN KENAI: The Department has begun an Electronic Monitoring (EM) program in the Kenai/Soldotna area. Sentenced inmates selected for EM will be those who are of lower custody levels, such as misdemeanants and felons convicted of property crimes. They would be required to pay a weekly fee for participation, and would be closely monitored by probation officers assigned to the program. In most cases inmates on EM would also be required to participate in community work service projects and maintain employment. The implementation of this program in the Kenai area will serve several critical functions. It will ease crowding at DOC institutions, thereby increasing safety for both officers and inmates. Also, since most inmates in the program will be required to maintain employment, they will be required to make payments on their court ordered financial obligations. Placement in the program would also allow inmates to obtain community-based treatment, such as out-patient substance abuse treatment.

PROBATION OFFICER ACADEMY #18 GRADUATES CLASS OF 27:



The 27 members of the Probation Training Academy #18 sit at the Wilda Marsden Theater in Anchorage as the graduation ceremony gets underway. Class members included: Rebecca Albright, Mindy Fortin, David Muise, Stephen Sterling, Shirley Wasuli (Aketachunak) and Warren Waters of the Anchorage Complex; Taryn Bachman, Michael Chadwick, Shannon Crowley, Selena Griswold, Thomas Karpow, Anastasia Kiefer, Dwaine Ratley, Terreea Telkamp and Edward Webster of the Anchorage Probation Office; Michael McGinty of the Arizona Unit; Timothe Sherman of the Bethel Probation Office; William Dooley, Jason Petty and Christopher Santos of the Fairbanks Probation Office; Michael Ross of the Ketchikan Correctional Center; Melissa Crowe, Kathi Forgue, and Steven Imoe of the Palmer Probation office; Claire Sullivan and Brenda Vanness-Crista of Spring Creek Correctional Center, and Misty Hedlund of Wildwood Correctional Center.

Correctional Officer Academy #103 is presently underway.

■ Read [Commissioner Schmidt's address to the graduating class here.](#)

EMPLOYMENT UPDATE: Employment statistics for February 2007.

	Correctional Officers	Probation Officers
Conditional Offers	12	0
New Hires	12	1
Transfers In	3	0
Promotions	0	0
Resignations	4	2
Retirements	1	0

WORKFORCE TOTAL	750	146
<i>as of March 5</i>		
BUDGETED FY07	790	165