



# Commissioner's CORNER

"To Protect the Public by Incarcerating and Supervising Offenders"

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**A report by COMMISSIONER JOE SCHMIDT**  
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**March 27, 2009**

## **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@alaska.gov](mailto:richard.schmitz@alaska.gov)

## **DOC OFFERS SEX OFFENDER TREATMENT IN BETHEL:**

For many years, sex offender treatment and management programs have been scarce in the more isolated, smaller towns in Alaska. That's starting to change.

During the late summer of 2007, the Department began to develop a treatment program within the Tundra Center in Bethel, Alaska. This seemed like an ideal way to take care of two problems, empty beds at the CRC and lack of a treatment program in Bethel. DOC contracted with Steve Dempsey, LCSW to develop the program and provide clinical services, including supervision of less experienced clinicians. In August 2008, Joan Dewey, LCSW had joined the team and the first men entered the program space in September. Meanwhile, Steve developed a community program for the men who needed treatment, but who were successfully living in the community and did not need a CRC bed. By March 2009, the CRC program was starting to place offenders in the second apartment. The number of available slots at Tundra Center Sex Offender Program will cap at 19 and the community program has ten available treatment slots.

Now, after many years with no services and about eight months of intensive work, the program is really starting to develop and fit into the community. Treatment personnel have formed an advisory group of local people, including individuals from the tribal organizations, the churches, the women's shelter, law enforcement, victims' services agencies and other concerned citizens. During the last week of March, eight advisory group members will present materials on victim-related issues to program residents. The program has developed a positive relationship with the local women's shelter and recently joined the shelter workers on

a local radio call-in show focused on the new program. Program personnel are also working with local pastors to develop training for church members on appropriately monitoring sex offenders who become part of their congregation. (Pictured below: the advisory group in session)



Development of this program has been very different from prior endeavors of the department. From the beginning, it was clear that the program had to

be relevant to the community or it wouldn't last. To this end, the treatment and probation staff sought advisory group members that would work with them on a variety of issues. It has been quite amazing to watch this process take shape. Even such seemingly simple tasks as having the advisory board work with the treatment staff to identify Yupik words that explained treatment concepts have made the program more pertinent to the community. The program has a heavy emphasis on restorative justice principles, as well as on community safety. As part of their treatment plan, men traveling to their villages in the coming months will be required to perform spring subsistence activities that provide sustenance for their families and others in the villages. Prior to these events, the treatment staff and the program participants will meet as a group with all Safety Net members to learn about each man's offense pattern and how they can most effectively function as a support person to decrease the chances of re-offense. When the men travel to their villages for the spring subsistence activities, they will have assignments that they must complete in conjunction with their safety team members, all aimed at prevention of future sexual abuse and at supporting healing in the community

## **ANVIL MOUNTAIN CC, KOTZEBUE FPO TAKE WORST OF WINTER**



A huge winter storm blew through the Northwest coast, leaving high drifts and challenging conditions. The above photos were taken the day after: on the left, door-high drifts build up alongside Anvil Mountain Correctional Center in Nome; on the right, drifts nearly cover the window at the new Kotzebue Field Probation Office.

AMCC Superintendent Marc Okuley reported: “During the height of the March storm roads were mostly impassable due to high drifts and zero visibility. AMCC Correctional Officers Doug Buchanan, Tracie Ketchum, Adam Lust, and Sine’ Holly used their snow machines to ferry co-workers who were stranded at work or unable to drive to work, to and from their homes. Snow drifts in the in many Nome areas were as high as the buildings and often had completely buried cars and trucks.”

## **SERVICE DOG WYATT TRANSFERRED TO WOUNDED WARRIOR:**

Staff and inmate trainers at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center said goodbye to Wyatt, the first service dog to be successfully trained at the facility, in a ceremony on March 6 attended by Governor Sarah Palin. Wyatt, a 2-year-old lab mix, was presented to Warrior Transition Battalion Sgt. William Ondell by Mat-Su Borough Deputy Mayor Lynne Woods. Wyatt, selected from the SPOT program, was trained for well over a year and mastered



the skills needed to be of assistance to the wounded Iraq veteran. The program at Hiland Mountain is continuing as new dogs have begun training. (Above: Lt. Col. Marc Hoffmeister holds on to Sha Ren who has just started training.) Commissioner Joe Schmidt and the Governor addressed the visitors, staff and some 74 inmates in attendance at the facility's gym.

“These kinds of programs are about giving back. That’s very important,” the Commissioner told the audience. Speaking directly to the inmates, Schmidt continued: “We know criminal behavior is very selfish; and when you’re involved in a program like this you’re not being selfish. ... You’re helping a wounded veteran, changing your behavior and you’re giving back to the community.”



**WYATT WITH WARRIOR:**  
*The service dog Wyatt poses with his new family and the Governor at Hiland Mtn. Correctional Center. From left: Sgt. William Ondell, his wife, Reece, Governor Palin, son Dylan and daughter Meagan.*

**WILDWOOD, CHAPLAINCY HOSTS WEEKEND KAIROS CONFERENCE:**

The Wildwood Correctional Center hosted Kairos Weekend No. 3 January 8-11, coordinated through the Chaplaincy program. Kairos Prison Ministry is international in scope and conducts a highly structured lay Christian ministry designed for male and female correctional institutions. Their mission is to bring a positive message to incarcerated individuals and their families, and to assist the incarcerated in their transition to becoming a productive citizen.



Close to 40 prisoners, and about 30 lay volunteers participated in the program. Meals for the prisoner participants, staff, and volunteers during the event were prepared by outside volunteers in the community along with hundreds of dozens of homemade cookies. "The scope of this program will likely have a positive effect on the entire facility for months. It was a great success," said chaplaincy coordinator Rev. Mikeensch. Each year the Chaplaincy office typically schedules two Kairos weekends at the department's contract facility in Arizona and at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center, and one at Wildwood. The Kairos organization generates its own funding for these weekend events.

## **LARGEST PO CLASS TO DATE GRADUATES FROM ACADEMY:**

An all-time record high 33 probation officers graduated from the PO Academy on February 20. The ceremony was held at the Palmer Railroad Depot, and keynote



speakers included division directors Donna White and Garland Armstrong. The graduates were a mix of field and institutional POs, and were from all regions of the state.



## **LEGISLATORS SEE CORRECTIONS FROM THE INSIDE:**

*Rep. Lindsey Holmes of Anchorage, left, and staffer Lisa Valenta, right, speak with Lemon Creek C.C. assistant superintendent Bruce Busby during a tour of the facility during this year's legislative session. Tours for legislators are a tradition for the facility.*

## **LEMON CREEK INMATES GIVE BACK WITH COOKIE SALES:**

In an expression of support for some young crime victims, the inmate's Multi Culture Club at Lemon Creek Correctional Center are selling girl scout cookies to inmates, with half the proceeds set aside for a girl scout troop which had been victimized by a robbery. PO Dave Wilson said the inmate club bought 10 cases with 12 boxes to a case. Almost all have been sold, Wilson said.



## **SPOTLIGHT ON GOOSE CREEK:**

### **DOC'S TED KINNEY KNOWS WHERE THE RAZOR WIRE GOES**

As the Goose Creek Correctional Center works through its final design process, Facilities Manager II Ted Kinney is the department's go-to professional. Kinney, who retired as a Lt. Colonel from the Air Force, has worked for the department for close to 25 years, and presently supervises the department's expansion efforts. His primary task, however, is overseeing the department's role in constructing the new prison at Point Mackenzie.



Kinney, who holds an MBA from Indiana University, graduated from Oregon State with a BS in forestry management. "There's a lot in common between working in the military and for corrections. When it comes to institutions, the only difference is where you put the razor ribbon. In the military it goes on the outside, to keep people out. With corrections, it goes on the inside, to keep people in," Kinney said.

"Building a prison is as complex as building a war ship," said Deputy Commissioner Dwayne Peeples. "Ted is in charge of mastering all the nuts and bolts and tedious stuff. He has to be completely aware of all the minutae needed to build a prison from the ground up."

Most of us walk up or down stairs, Peeples explained. Kinney "facilitates vertical movement." He managed the department's input into the RFP and followed up with managing the department's evaluation of the responses. At present he is mastering all the facets needed to build and operate a small, self-contained city.

When Kinney is not building things for the department he is pursuing his favorite hobby: "building things. ... And, hunting and fishing and enjoying my four grandkids."