



**By COMMISSIONER JOE SCHMIDT**  
**Alaska Department of Corrections**  
**December 20, 2006**

**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.



**Above:** Deputy Commissioner Sam Edwards, Assistant Superintendent Amy Rabeau and Production Manager I Ken Rupert take a break from an inspection tour to visit with a SPOT dog at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center.

### **POINT MACKENZIE CHOSEN AS SITE FOR NEW PRISON:**

With television and radio news crews present, the Executive Site Selection Committee met at the Anchorage Central Office on December 8 and decided by consensus that a site at Point Mackenzie was the best choice for the department's new prison. Sutton was selected as No. 2 choice. The committee included Commissioner Joe Schmidt and representatives from the Mat-Su Borough and the Alaska Housing Finance Corp. The site is being reviewed by the borough's Planning Commission and its decision will be sent to the Borough Assembly for final approval in mid-January.

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

### **HMCC INMATES' ADOPT-A-VILLAGE EFFORT AIDS KIVALINA:**



**Above:** From left to right: CO II Denise Denato, Assistant Superintendent Amy Rabeau, Commissioner Joe Schmidt, CO III Gary Damron, Superintendent Dean Marshall.

After a successful first year, inmates at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center renewed its 'Adopt-A-Village' Program, raising \$13,551 in gifts and supplies for the Western Alaska village of Kivalina. The program is sponsored by the Native Culture Council. Council Chief Heather Simas said traditional Inupiat village of 400 was selected for the drive because of the troubles the community faces from erosion of its shoreline.

The fund-raising effort is supported by inmates as a whole, and by outside donors including the Elks and Lions Clubs. This year inmates crocheted approximately 500 blankets, hats, scarves and slippers and directly donated funds to purchase school supplies and craft items. Hiland Mountain inmates also take part in a 'give back' program, which allows participants to provide restitution to the community as a whole.

Using supplies purchased by the Inmate Council, inmates in the program sewed 55 adult-size quilts which will be sent to Kivalina.

In addition, Superintendent Marshall reported the Inmate Council has donated \$5,000 to the Salvation Army's Adopt-A-Family Program, along with handmade quilts from the 'Give Back' Program. Three families were adopted; two were parents with three children ages 1-13 and one included parents with four children age 12-18.

**POINT MAC INMATES MAKE 1,000 TOYS FOR CHRISTMAS GIVING:**

Inmates at the Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm made 1,000 wooden toys in 2006 for distribution in the annual 'Toys for Tots' holiday program. Half of the toys went to the Marine Corps; the other half went to the Coast Guard in Juneau where they were put aboard a vessel Liberty for delivery to Kake, Angoon, Pelican and Hoonah. The Marines delivered their toys to youngsters in Interior villages.

**QUICK ACTION BY PROBATION OFFICE RESULTS IN ARREST:**

On November 11, Probation Officer Ryan Schmidt received a telephone call from Anchorage Police Department Officer Wendy Shackelford, who reported information leading to the arrest of a fugitive sex offender. Officer Shackelford's beat is Chugiak High School, and over time she has developed excellent rapport with students. One of those students, who'd already graduated, reported to Officer Shackelford that she had learned that a sex offender on probation for a Sexual Abuse of a Minor was living at a Fairbanks residence along with a young girl whose father had been deployed to Iraq. The former student also provided Officer Shackelford with a link to the sex offender's page on MySpace.com. Responding to a call from Officer Shackelford, the Fairbanks District Probation Office dispatched three probation officers to the reported address where they arrested the sex offender without incident and transported him to the Fairbanks Correctional Center. Officer Shackelford was notified of the arrest as was the young girl's father.

**GENEROSITY OF DOC STAFF BOOSTS SHARE CAMPAIGN:**

DOC staff contributed right around \$20,000 to the annual SHARE campaign. In all, 130 department employees took part – an improvement of 123.8 percent over 2005. That puts the Department of Corrections in the top five departments and agencies when it comes to improved participation. The second annual Point Mac produce raffle resulted in 10 frozen turkeys and close to half a ton of potatoes delivered to winners.

### **FIELD RIDER PROGRAM UNDER EVALUATION AT POINT MAC:**



In a muddy field, hooves trump tires and when visibility is a plus the view is a lot better from atop a horse than through a windshield. That's the theory behind the 'field rider' program currently under evaluation at Point Mackenzie Correctional Farm. CO II J.D. Karsten and an 11-year-old Pasafino gelding named Echo are training (see photo, left) together pending the program's final approval. Ideally, a small group of officers will train as field riders and then be available for mounted patrol as need arises. "A field rider will never get stuck in a field," explained Commissioner Joe

Schmidt, who inaugurated the program while Superintendent at the correctional farm. "Instead of burning gas you're creating fertilizer. A mounted officer can weave in and out of trees and has high platform for good visibility. Echo was donated to the farm by the Mat-Su Borough.

### **HILAND MOUNTAIN EDUCATOR NAMED TEACHER OF THE YEAR:**

Hiland Mountain's R.C. Fisher has been honored by the Alaska Career and Technology Education Program as Teacher of the Year for 2005-06. The program recognizes individuals and their programs for their

contributions in the field of career and technical education. "This is a special honor for me since my competitors are teachers and educators in school districts, technical colleges and the University of Alaska system," Fisher said. "As a Department of Corrections educator it was not only a surprise, but the award was a true affirmation of my



commitment to educating and training the confined in the areas of cutting edge technology." Hiland Mountain has one of the most aggressive Information Technology training programs in the nation, within a correctional facility. "Inmates are learning how to repair

computers and set up networks, designing and managing databases,” Fisher added. The HMCC program is being used as a template to establish similar programs in other Alaska facilities. Fisher has one caution, however: “I certainly don’t want folks to commit crimes to get into our programs.”

**CORRECTIONAL OFFICER ACADEMY GRADUATES CLASS OF 31:**

**Below:** The class of the 102<sup>nd</sup> Correctional Office Academy takes the oath of office following graduation ceremonies at the Wilda Marsden Theater in Anchorage.



■ Read Commissioner Schmidt’s keynote address

**SPOT DOGS AVAILABLE FOR ADOPTION AT HILAND MOUNTAIN:**



Selected well-trained and good-natured canines from the Hiland Mountain SPOT program will be available to take home on December 27, according to Superintendent Dean Marshall. Adoption paperwork must be completed before hand, however. If you are interested in considering one of the dogs, such as Jake (right) please contact Assistant Superintendent Amy Rabeau at 696-9102 or Sgt. Dave Beaulieu at 696-9150. “You can come to Hiland Mountain and take a dog for a walk and meet a new friend. Please feel free to share this information with anyone looking for a pet,” Marshall added.

**EMPLOYMENT UPDATE:** Employment statistics for November 2006:

	Correctional Officers	Probation Officers
Conditional Offers	41	0
New Hires	12	1
Transfers In	8	0
Promotions	7	2
Resignations	4	0
Retirements	0	0