



Oregon CURE

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants

A Newsletter for Families and Friends of Incarcerated Individuals

1631 NE Broadway, #460 Portland, OR 97232

(503) 977-9979 (Portland Area) 1-877-357-CURE (Outside Portland)

DOC Examines Community Feedback

Sometimes the learning curve is pretty steep. Last November Oregon's Department of Corrections Director Colette S. Peters learned just how powerful the social media outlet Facebook is when she sent out a holiday message on the DOC Facebook page. The responses were mixed but included a significant number of negative posts on a variety of issues from family and friends of adults in custody. To her credit, Director Peters decided to turn the posts into an opportunity to learn more about the public's concerns and find ways to use the information to improve Oregon's corrections agency.

In December, Kristi Brandt, DOC Communications and Research Coordinator, contacted Oregon CURE to ask for help in identifying these "hot button" issues of concern. Oregon CURE reviewed the Facebook posts and responded to DOC with a list of issues gathered from the posts, and from comments made and expressed within Oregon CURE support groups, and intake and release orientations. Oregon CURE saw this as a 'golden opportunity' to provide feedback, and provided DOC with the following list.

- Lack of programs, jobs, education, constructive activities, mentoring and contact with community, treatment, counseling, pre-release preparation (MRT, etc)
- Lack of response by staff to threats between adults in custody
- Challenges to visitations
- No incentives for rehabilitation, just warehousing
- Not enough case managers to counsel adults in custody, and those with low ACRE scores not getting any attention by case managers
- Need for staff training, something along the lines of conflict resolution
- Family concerns resulting in no follow-up, or changes at the facility level
- Housing issues not addressed, resulting in negative outcomes

On March 1, DOC and Oregon CURE Board members met to discuss these issues and to brainstorm ways to make improvements. The challenges are great, budgets are diminishing, but we will continue to advocate for the improved safety and well being of our loved ones in prison.

Sponsorship Drive

In our last newsletter we sent out a request for sponsors to fund the adults in custody that lack financial means to make a contribution for their newsletters. Our goal was to have 50% of our non-paying recipients sponsored by March of 2014. It is with great pleasure that we announce success in achieving this goal! We thank you, our members that generously contributed. We also want to recognize and profoundly thank the many people that have no direct involvement with CURE or the Department of Corrections, but made generous contributions because they recognize the need of reaching out to those that are incarcerated, and they value the worth of what we are doing. Thank you for making this a successful drive.

Paul Solomon
Dmitri and Lorena Stankevich
Numerous Anonymous Donors

Bonnie and Frank Nusser
Sherrie Barger

Rebecca Read
Barb and Tom Cooney

Gretchen Vala
Marc and Christine Stephen

Look Inside: For an Introduction to our Newest Member of our Board of Directors!
Finding Hope
Colorado Corrections Director Does Time
Documentation!!!

Publication Notice

This newsletter is a publication of Oregon CURE. Oregon CURE is a 501 (c) (3) organization whose goal is to reduce crime through criminal justice reform.

The opinions and statements contained in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Oregon CURE.

Contributions of articles, letters to the editor, notices, etc., are welcome, but may be edited or rejected for space considerations.

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Newsletter Editor: Bonnie Nusser

Contributions and Inquiries can be directed to:

Oregon CURE

1631 NE Broadway, #460

Portland, OR 97232

Telephone: (503) 977-9979 (Portland area)

1-877-357-CURE (2873) (Outside Portland)

Website: www.oregoncure.org

Oregon CURE is an all-volunteer organization. Oregon CURE volunteers typically work at other jobs.

Oregon CURE is not a service organization. Do not send us any legal documents. We are not a legal service. We are not qualified to assist you in legal matters.

From the Editor:

The cover article regarding the Thanksgiving Facebook message from the DOC notes the beginning of a conversation between the DOC and Oregon CURE. A number of action items were noted at our March meeting and their progress will be reported in future newsletters.

We are happy to report the addition of four new board members in the past several months! Rebecca, Cheryl, Paul and Patty come to us with enthusiasm and a variety of talent. Look for the article on Patty inside! We welcome them and thank them for their commitment.

Don't forget to check out our website! Michele has made fabulous changes to it this past year and continues to do so. www.oregoncure.org

Thanks to all of you for your continued support.
Bonnie

Oregon CURE Website

The NEW and IMPROVED Oregon CURE website has been online officially for a year. We are excited to report that we have had more than 10,000 hits since the new website came online. On average, visitors repeat their visit over 4 times. We believe that this indicates that www.OregonCURE.org is becoming a valuable resource to our community.

Our website consists of a blog, reporting Support Group announcements and important news blurbs the Oregon CURE Board of Directors believes should be related to the community as a whole. Additionally, we have electronic copies of our Community Resource Brochure available for download. This resource contains support group meetings and intake and release orientation information. We receive frequent comments on our posts and emails to the website administrator, but often have to refrain from publishing these comments to protect the identity of the correspondent. Our correspondence secretary and/or president follow up each of these comments as timely as possible.

We are updating all of our publications as well as transition information and will post the updates as soon as they are available.

Check back frequently! And, we thank you sincerely for your support.

Encouraging Words...

Let go of the life you planned in order to have the life that is waiting for you – Joseph Campbell

If you want a guarantee buy a toaster - Anonymous

Whatever satisfies the soul is truth – Dalai Lama

Please Note:

Due to the high cost of printing materials Oregon CURE charges \$2 each for booklets requested. **We will continue to provide all items free of charge to adults in custody.** Those booklets currently include: "Sometimes You're the Hammer, Sometimes You're the Nail," "Free-er – but Not Free," and "Keeping Love Alive." When making your request, please include a check made out to Oregon CURE. Thank you.

The Oregon CURE Board of Directors Welcomes Patty Katz!

Patty Katz is in long-term recovery, which means she hasn't used alcohol or other drugs since 2000. All of the things she gave up in her addiction are coming back to her – the unity of her family continues to grow; she is a mother, a grandmother, a sister and a friend. Recovery gives her great joy.

Her passion is organizing and helping people reclaim personal democracy. Recently Patty worked with her friend Louise Wedge to form a 501 (c)3 non-profit: Hands Across the Bridge Project. Its mission is to create a program to use as a vehicle to provide leadership development in the recovering and re-entry communities, and to give a voice to people that they may speak out on issues important to them while engaging in the political process, many for the first time. Leaders will become proficient in public speaking, event planning, and fundraising.

Patty is the Portland/Metro Organizer for Oregon Action. As a formerly incarcerated woman, she brings personal experience to her work relating to re-entry and recovery.

Patty asked if our readers would be interested in stories from people after they left prison. She wants our readers to know there is life after prison and people are out here doing the next right thing. She wants people living in prison and their families to know that when released we are able to reclaim our personal democracy along with becoming productive members of society.

Look for her first story in our next newsletter.

Telmate Website Change!

For those of you who have been able to take advantage of the video phone calls offered through Telmate – you may have noticed that they have upgraded their website! As with all changes, it takes a little time to find your way around the site. One of the tools I utilized was the “help” option to confirm the video and sound were functioning properly prior to each video phone call. With the upgrade – I couldn't find the help feature! I contacted Telmate via e-mail and they gave me step by step instructions!

Follow these steps to get to the help feature:

You can login to www.telmate.com or go straight to: www.gettingout.com

Click on the “help” option

It will take you to: <http://www.gettingout.com>.

You do not have to log on to the site again

Scroll down – choose the “Remote Video Visit” option

Click on: How do I set up my home computer for at-home visits?

It will take you to: <https://visit.telmate.com/test>

You can then test your webcam and speakers! If you have a problem with the video call – phone Telmate immediately at 866-516-0115 and a customer service representative will assist you!

Prison Reform by Tricia Hedin

To choose this kind of work
takes courage, she said
offering me a compliment
on my willingness
to tread in the soft quicksand of politics

My eyes widened in surprise.
I never thought of it as choice
but merely a necessary risk
because I saw people drowning
slipping quickly beneath
the dark liquid surface.
I never thought of it as courage

Who would turn their back
and walk away?

Support Group Meeting Information

*Monthly Support Groups are
held throughout the state.*

*Please refer to our
website: www.oregoncure.org
for contact information, dates
and times.*

Intake Orientation

Release Orientation

*Please refer to our website
www.oregoncure.org for
contact information, dates and
times for these quarterly
orientations.*

My formula for living is quite simple. I
get up in the morning and I go to bed at
night. In between, I occupy myself as
best I can. *Cary Grant*

Whether you think you can – or can't –
You're right! *Henry Ford*

Do what you feel in your heart to be
right – for you will be criticized anyway!
You will be damned if you do and
damned if you don't. *Eleanor Roosevelt*

Colorado Corrections Director Does Time by Rebecca Read

On January 23 Colorado's newly appointed state corrections director, Rick Raemisch, took "on-the-job-training" to a new level. In order to learn more about Administrative Segregation, or what is commonly known as solitary confinement, Raemisch spent 20 hours in Administrative Segregation (Ad Seg) in a Colorado state prison, and reported his findings in the February 21 New York Times op-ed piece **'My Night in Solitary'**. This is a summary of the article, and additional information on solitary confinement reform beginning to take hold in states across the country.

Raemisch was appointed to the position by Colorado Gov. Hickenlooper in 2013, and was charged with meeting three goals: to limit or eliminate the use of solitary confinement for mentally ill inmates; address the needs of those who have been in solitary for long periods; and reduce the number of offenders released directly from solitary confinement back into their communities. In his op-ed Raemisch noted that "most states now agree that solitary confinement is overused" and many are beginning to act. New York recently agreed to a new set of reforms pertaining to solitary confinement. Mississippi and Washington states are also looking at how to reduce its use.

For Raemisch, his 20-hour stint shed light on the effects of solitary confinement, and confirmed that solitary was "daunting" even for someone "with a sound mind". He wondered what the effects would be on those who were mentally ill. The Director acknowledged that Ad Seg is used to temporarily make the prison run more smoothly by removing an inmate from the general population who acts up. But, he notes, "By placing a difficult offender in isolation you have not solved the problem – only delayed or more likely exacerbated it, not only for the prison, but ultimately for the public." He states the job of corrections is to "protect the community, not to release people who are worse than they were when they came in."

Raemisch explained the different types of administrative segregation. Inmates in regular Ad Seg have access to books or TVs but inmates in RFP Seg (Removed From Population) have no personal property. Raemisch was housed in RFP. His cell measured 7 by 13 feet, and had only a bed, toilet, and sink – all bolted down. It was not a quiet place but alarmingly noisy with filtered noises from adjacent areas of the prison. Lights went on and off arbitrarily, not in sync with day and night. It took no time at all for the Colorado director to feel the effects of isolation, and a feeling of paranoia took hold. He realized that time spent in Ag Seg would have eventually chipped away at this sanity. His stay was only 20 hours. In Colorado, inmates are sent to solitary on average of 23 months. Some spend 20 years.

Colorado's corrections director praised his predecessor, Tom Clements, who was an advocate for segregation reform. Before his assassination in 2013, he and his staff had, within two years, reduced the use of solitary confinement by more than half. It had been one of the highest rates in the country (1,505 inmates). As of January Raemisch and his staff have reduced solitary confinement numbers down to 593. He noted the number of severely mentally ill inmates in Ad Seg is now down to single digits. It is worth noting that Tom Clements was murdered by a gang member who had been recently released directly from Ad Seg.

In 2006, the Vera Institute of Justice established the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, which conducted an investigation of prison use of solitary confinement and concluded "the increasing use of high-security segregation is counter-productive, often causing violence inside facilities and contributing to recidivism after release." The Commission recommended that prisons make segregation a last resort and make it a more productive form of confinement, stop releasing people directly from segregation to the community, ensure that segregated prisoners have regular and meaningful human contact, and protect mentally ill prisoners.

In Raemisch's op-ed he cited research conducted by Terry Kupers, a psychiatrist who is an expert on confinement. Kupers testified in a Wisconsin case concerning confinement by stating that "prisoners suffering from mental illnesses, or who are prone to serious mental illness or suicide" are at risk in solitary confinement and that it is "an extreme hazard to prisoner mental health and well-being." Kupers stated that confinement "causes irreparable emotional damage and psychiatric disability as well as extreme anguish and suffering, and in some cases presents a risk of death by suicide."

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Coffee Creek Correctional Facility Book Club

by Marilyn Read, past facilitator

The year was 2003 and I had just completed a volunteer training at the Santiam facility to work with a pre-release program for male inmates. Unfortunately, the program was cancelled before I started. Another program was forming and I was asked to get involved. This program was to bring elements of the theater arts to CCCF. While the program was being developed the organizer sadly passed away. I was asked to take over the program. I didn't know a thing about drama, or drama coaching for that matter, but I did know a thing or two about book clubs. I thought a club at CCCF would be a good idea for the women.

I had been a member of several book clubs myself and knew the basic mechanics of how they worked. I wrote a proposal and submitted it to then Superintendent Joan Palmanteer. In April 2003 it was approved. Law librarian, Gloria Solomon, served as coordinator for the club. It was decided that eight members was an appropriate size. The club met in the law library twice a month.

The club format included reading donated books and engaging in discussion that included evaluation of writing style and storyline, character development, and sharing of members' personal reactions. Members drew up objectives for the club, which included expanding education, building speaking and listening skills, objective reasoning and leadership development. Members took turns leading group discussions.

Through the years the benefits of the club unfolded. The women, through disciplined participation and respectful behavior, developed pride in their achievements, and developed a sense of self-confidence. A strong sense of comradery flourished and members supported one another's achievements.

The list of over 200 books read during that time is a testament to the level of group dedication and personal commitment. The books chosen were challenging and covered a broad range of subjects. Occasionally, a book wasn't very good but the women weren't bashful about giving it a good critiquing. We had many a good laugh over the subjects and characters. Members found meaningful connections to their own lives through the stories we read. All of these factors reinforce the goals of rehabilitation and self-improvement. The ODOC commended this program and acknowledged the importance of the women's dedication to the club.

My involvement terminated in April 2013 but the book club remains active under the guidance of Library Coordinator, Angela Wheeler and volunteer Lauren Gunderson, who is affiliated with the Wilsonville Library. The Wilsonville Library Foundation, through its generous contributions, provides an excellent selection of books for the club. I am very proud of the CCCF Book Club, and consider it an honor to have been involved. I will always cherish the friendships I forged with the women of the club, and am a strong advocate for the duplication of this program elsewhere.

(Colorado Corrections continued from page 4)

In Oregon, there are three types of confinement: Disciplinary Segregation Unit (DSU), Administrative Segment (Ag Seg), and Intensive Management Unit (IMU). For a detailed description of the types of housing used in Oregon facilities refer to The Oregon Department of Corrections Handbook for Family and Friends of Inmates (oregon.gov/doc).

On February 25 Director Raemisch joined a panel that spoke at the hearing for the US Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Human Rights called "Reassessing Solitary Confinement II: The Human Rights, Fiscal and Public Safety Consequences."

To find out more about solitary confinement policies and reform, contact the following sources:

Solitary Watch (solitarywatch.com), Center for Human Rights and Constitutional Law (centerforhumanrights.org), American Civil Liberties Union (aclu.org), National Alliance on Mental Illness (nami.org), Vera Institute of Justice (vera.org)

DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT By Becky Smith

Whether or not you are dealing with the criminal system from the inside or helping a loved one from the outside, you will encounter conflicts with authority. You, or your loved one, may face conflicts over issues regarding safety, health, or education, just to name a few. Over the years I have had countless clients ask me for help in resolving their conflicts with the authorities in the system. As a result I have developed some basic guidelines to assist them along the way.

There are a number of approaches that can be taken when facing conflict. We can (1) do nothing – crying, “Woe is me!” or (2) get angry- Kicking and screaming along the way or (3) think it through and try to work things out. Options 1 and 2 are easy; they are knee jerk reactions that anyone can do. But option 3 is harder. It requires deliberate thought, followed by a plan of action, supported by documentation along the way. Here are a few steps to help you get going on effectively resolving your issues.

1. IF YOU ARE ACTING ON BEHALF OF SOMEONE INSIDE REGARDING A MEDICAL ISSUE – Be sure you have release forms signed and in place. Otherwise HIPAA laws kick in and information **cannot** be shared. These forms are available through medical.
2. GET ORGANIZED - Get a notebook/folder to write in and keep all the information gathered in one place. On the first page write out a brief answer to each question below.
3. WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? Keep it short and to the point. If there is more than one issue put them in the order of importance. This will help you decide which battle you choose to fight first.
4. WHAT DO YOU WANT AS YOUR OUTCOME? Ultimately this will be the focus of all your communications with the powers that be. Don't muddy the waters with anger and frustration or seeking retribution; it will only get doors slammed in your face when what you really want is for the doors to open.
5. WHAT MAKES YOUR PROBLEM A VALID ISSUE? You want their attention and a way to keep it. Authorities tend to pay more attention to things that affect them in some way. Often you may find it's not about you but rather more about what is important to them. It's good to use attention getting words such as “personal safety”, “life threatening”, “violations” of basic rights, a threat to the “safety and security of the institution”, “accountability”, “responsibility”, and “disrespect”.
6. IS THERE A “RULE” INVOLVED? If so, find out all you can about the rule. If you are inside you can get the information from the law library. If you are outside you can find the rules on the State of Oregon website by looking for the Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) relating to the Department of Corrections (ODOC). You can get additional information on rules and policies such as the ODOC Accountability Model, medical procedures, as well as contact information from the ODOC website. Remember information is a powerful tool. The more you know and understand about the issue at hand the more effective your communications will be.
7. WHAT IS THE PROTOCOL? Is there a grievance or appeal procedure? Asking- “What is the procedure?” is a vital step to show your intent of cooperation. Once you know the procedure, follow it to the letter best you can.
8. WHO IS IN THE CHAIN OF COMMAND? A big mistake many make is thinking they need to go directly to the top. It may sound like a good idea but chances are if you get ahead of yourself and try to start at the top they will only direct you back to the beginning of the chain of command. In the meantime you have probably lost valuable time. Keep in mind some grievances are time sensitive. In some facilities the chain of command can usually be found on the bulletin board in each unit.

Now that you have your homework done you are ready to take action -

1. WHAT IS YOUR PLAN OF ATTACK? Before you make any contact with the powers that be, be sure you write down your plan of attack. Your plan should include -
 - A short description of the problem
 - List any Rules/Regulations involved
 - List your chain of command
 - An outline of the events of the problem in the order that they occurred.
 - A list of steps already taken addressing the issue.
 - State a clear idea what you want from the contact. Is it information, or are you asking for some kind of action?
2. **DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT, DOCUMENT!!!!** - This is by far the most important key to success. In your notebook keep a separate page to make a communication log. Remember - No one without documentation wins the “he said – she said” battle. Documentation should include-
 - Who was contacted, their position and rank. Most importantly write down the date.
 - How they were contacted – phone call, kyte, letter etc.
 - Always include any contacts you attempted and did not receive, or are still waiting for, a reply.
 - What was said, promised or instructed

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Finding Hope by LaRae Conley

I have often felt so hopeless by present circumstances. My feelings of hopelessness started long ago when I wasn't able to save my loved one from making the wrong choices time and time again. I felt more hopeless still, when I was unable to influence the judicial system in any way to keep him from going to prison. He is now there and firmly entrenched within the confines of that system. Now when problems have arisen, I have felt more hopeless than ever. Where can I find hope in a system that is so huge, so unwieldy, so insensitive, and so unsympathetic?

I am not a confrontational person. I am not a brave person. In fact, I am a person that is easily intimidated by those that I perceive as having power over me, from supervisors at work, to policemen on the street, to the employees at the correctional facilities that have housed my loved one. I am one person. One powerless person. How can I make my tiny voice heard inside such a huge and unfeeling institution as this system we call prison? The answer to that is simple. I can do it one phone call, one letter, one email, one support meeting, at a time.

The first time I called the facility about a problem where my loved one was housed, I was nauseous with anxiety. I planned out, even wrote out, what I wanted to say. I picked the phone up, and put the phone down, ten times. I self-talked, telling myself that the person I wanted to talk to was just that, another person. It was truly a traumatic experience for me. My voice shook as I asked for and was connected to the person I needed to talk to, and it continued to shake as I started the conversation. But I did it. When I was done, I felt jubilant, triumphant. I felt that I had claimed some power.

I would like to say that the next time I called the institution it was a piece of cake, but I went through the exact trauma as I did the first time. I would also like to say that my phone calls brought about the results that I was seeking. They did not. Not even close. But what they did bring about was a new sense of empowerment and as I have begun to feel empowered, I have begun to feel less hopeless.

Throughout my experiences of trying to get my voice heard, I have come to another understanding. If I am on the outside, with access to telephones, email, postage stamps, and an automobile, and I still feel hopeless and powerless, how must our loved ones on the inside feel? If I am not being heard, who is going to listen to them? With this realization comes my resolve to be an advocate, and to encourage you to become one as well.

Being an advocate for your loved one is not easy. It takes persistence, perseverance, and patience. Ever, ever, so much persistence, perseverance, and patience. And time. Being an advocate is more than just being supportive. Advocating means that you need to persist to get answers to your questions and concerns. It means that "no" may not be the answer if it is coming from a person that does not have the power to say, "yes". It means you must persevere until you find that one person that has the power to say "yes", and that when you find that person and the answer is still "no", you have the patience to accept that the system is what it is, so now you must continue to persevere on a different level, perhaps by writing to your state senator or representative, or writing to the Director of Corrections, or by joining CURE in its fight to bring about prison reform.

We (CURE) have no list of who to call when problems arise. We have no definitive answers to most questions asked. What we do have is our understanding that change will only occur if we patiently continue to persist and persevere in what we feel is best for our loved ones on the inside. The more of us that join together, the stronger our voices will become, and our loved ones will feel the hope and the power through us.

Document, Document, Document (Continued from page 6)

- What action will be taken, and message if not connected.
- Save **EVERYTHING!!!** - All kytes, letters, DR's, returned NCR sheets, and a copy of any rules that apply.

It will not go unnoticed that you are documenting. If you find yourself facing possible legal action in the future, it will be your documentation that will carry the most weight in negotiations or court.

Last, but not least, do not underestimate the power of your attitude towards the problem at hand. A bad attitude can be the difference between success and failure. Bringing up emotions, other problems, or opinions, will only put the one you are communicating with on the defensive making them less likely to be helpful. Keep in mind that whoever you contact probably has a heavy workload and their time is valuable. Make your time count. Always be respectful, positive, appreciative and focused.

To ensure you receive your copy of the Oregon CURE Newsletter, please remember to send us your change of address so we can update our database.

CURE'S Expectations for a Justice System:
(Continued from the Fall 2013 Oregon CURE newsletter)

We therefore believe that the following practices should define our justice systems:

ADJUDICATION:

Anyone accused of a crime shall be represented by an attorney who has the qualifications, resources, and time to thoroughly explore the circumstances surrounding the crime and advocate for the defendant. This is true whether the crime is considered violent or nonviolent and whether it is resolved by trial or plea agreement.

The justice system shall understand and consider the individual's background and accomplishments, as well as the mitigating circumstances of the crime as thoroughly as they understand and consider the aggravating circumstances. No plea agreement shall occur without negotiations that are done with an engaged and competent attorney, in a manner that does not result in harm to any other defendant, and includes the judge.

Anyone who refuses to negotiate a plea agreement and is subsequently tried and convicted shall not be sentenced to a longer term than was offered in negotiations. The defendant shall not appear in court in shackles, restraints, or jail "uniform." Any action that results in the deprivation of an individual's liberty shall be decided based only upon the beyond – a – reasonable - doubt standard.

There shall be no loss of voting rights as a result of a criminal conviction. The criminal prosecution system shall consider evidence of someone's innocence, regardless of when that evidence becomes available and whether or not the court process or representation was flawed.

Renew your Membership to Oregon CURE Today!!

Send your Member donation to: Oregon CURE 1631 NE Broadway #460, Portland, OR 97232

Be sure to include: Your Name, Address, City, State and Zip, Phone/Email, Name of Adult in Custody with SID# and Facility

Type of Donation: Adult in Custody: \$3

Individual: \$15

Family: \$25

Sustaining: \$50 - \$100

Sponsor: \$100 - \$250

Benefactor: \$250 Plus