

# MCA TODAY

News from the Michigan Corrections Association



## NEW MEMBERS WANTED

During our Winter Mini-Conference we accepted over 20 new members into MCA. This was great news and MCA is appreciative of their support. Now we can do more. MCA wants to get more involvement from local and state agencies



that support the criminal justice system and corrections. If you know anyone who is interested in corrections, MCA is a great way to get some news and network with people in the business. We have student rates available too. We want to keep growing in strength and numbers, so let's get out there and communicate the benefits of MCA on others.

- It's a joint MCA/ACA membership with all the ACA benefits.
- It's only \$35.00 per year.
- Members receive "Corrections Today" Magazine with current correctional trends and information
- \$10,000 accidental death insurance.
- Discounts on ACA and MCA conferences and seminars.

## WINTER TRAINING SEMINAR REFLECTIONS



The winter conference was a great success. The Michigan State Police Academy was host site for a conference on "Terrorism in Jails and Prisons".

About 60 people from Michigan, Ohio, Illinois and Canada were in attendance. State, Local, and Federal agencies were represented as well as students and educators from various colleges. Joseph

Marchese presented a wealth of material that had participants interested and clamoring for more. MCA is considering Mr. Marchese for an Emergency Planning and Preparedness program in the future.

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## SUMMER TRAINING SEMINAR



MCA is pleased to announce its summer training seminar on "Staff Division and Conflict Resolution." The seminar will be held in Sault Ste. Marie, MI on June 23, 2006. MCA members from the Michigan Department of Corrections - Kinross Complex have agreed to assist with the planning and delivery of the conference. MCA looks forward to participation from corrections professionals throughout the UP and northern Lower Peninsula. A program description and registration form is included in this newsletter.



## MCA BY-LAWS

The MCA By-Laws are currently under review. MCA would like to have revisions complete by autumn. If you are interested in participating, would like a copy, or have suggestions regarding changes, please contact MCA President Rich Johnson at 1-800-455-9906 or via e-mail at [michcorrassoc@hotmail.com](mailto:michcorrassoc@hotmail.com).



## THE MCA GOLF OUTING



The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual MCA Golf Outing at Copper Ridge Golf Club in Davison is Friday, September 8, 2006. Please mark your calendars. Last year's event was very successful, but we would like to get 18 teams this year. If you have a team and are interested, please let MCA Golf Outing Chairperson Amy Hasbrouck know. She can be

contacted at [Hasbroal@michigan.gov](mailto:Hasbroal@michigan.gov). Also, if you would like to help with planning, setup, or registration, please let Amy know. It's never too soon to get involved. The event includes 18 holes, with cart, range time, BBQ cookout, and prizes.



# WHAT IF?

By John C. Cordell

Most of us in the field of corrections have been around long enough to hear the words “What if?” (However, I would challenge people to ask “What happens when?”, because in corrections it will happen at some point.) What if a prisoner hits the fence? What if a parolee brings a weapon into the parole office? What if I am taken hostage?

If you are relatively new to the field, you may be asking these questions for the very first time. If you have been around, you have probably asked them already. It doesn't matter when you ask the question, just that you ask it. And the answer may not matter either; it's what you do with the answer.

So what can you do with the answer to “What if?” You can make it into a game. If you are someone focused on your own safety, you may already play this game in your head. Maybe you are part of a team of employees who play the game together. If you aren't playing the game, you should be. It helps keep you, the offenders under your supervision, and the public safer.



But how does asking “What if?” keep you safe? It works by making you think of all the possible answers to the question. And it leads to more “What if?” questions. If you keep asking “What if?” you keep learning. You keep training your mind to react to the answer that comes from the “What if?” question. You keep challenging yourself and your organization to stay focused on what could or will happen.

Recently, two high profile incidents have occurred in the Michigan Corrections realm; a prison escape and a parolee who went on an alleged crime spree. Nobody is going to argue that these incidents were bad, and could have been even worse. But could they have been prevented by playing the “What if?” game? Let's play the game and see.

What if I notice a possible overfamiliar relationship between an employee and a prisoner? **The inspector may look into it further and find evidence.** What if I perform a thorough clothed body search and used the metal detector for each person who enters the facility? **I might find tools that could assist in an escape.** What if I search every vehicle thoroughly every time? **I might find a prisoner hiding inside.** What if I search the prisoner's cell frequently? **I might find letters, pictures or other items indicating a possible relationship.** These are just a few of the questions that may have kept staff focused on safety. There are many, many more. Would the answers have prevented the escape? Probably.

We can use the “What if” game to challenge ourselves and keep mental focus while traveling through our careers and lives. I would urge those who read this to do two things:

- If you haven’t done so already, expand the “What if?” game to areas outside of corrections. You can keep yourself and your family safe by doing so.
- Keep asking the questions that will keep you safe, and learn to recognize that in the business of corrections, the better question might be “What happens when?”

## **TRUST: THE OIL IN CORRECTION’S MOTOR**

By Joseph Bouchard



How often does the average person think about the motor in their car? The engine, though essential, is forgotten when it works well and without strange noises. However, when the engine stalls, the owners become frustrated. When the oil light comes on in the dash board, there is a sudden sense of alarm.

Owners wonder why the motor is not running well, attributing poor assembly to the manufacturer. Sometimes we curse the designer when we have car problems. It is natural to issue blame. Instantly, we consider logistics involved in repairing the engine. And the thought of repair costs always come to mind.

Corrections can be thought of as the engine in an automobile. If corrections is an engine that powers our detention system, it is not thought of when it works well. Professionalism and trust are the viscous substances that keep the engine parts from wearing too soon. All motors need oil in order to run efficiently and with longevity. All corrections systems need trust to function well. When the engine is operating smoothly, there is no concern.

One of the most powerful actions to evoke surprise and bitterness is the act of betrayal. Disloyalty in any area is particularly crushing when it is unexpected. That is the point at which the betrayed party is most vulnerable. Trust broken, quite simply, is hard to regain. The absence of trust is like an engine without oil.

In corrections, we have many trust relationships. To fully cultivate trust, we must develop and maintain loyalty towards these parties: Self, Prisoners, Coworkers, and Society.

**Self-** As individuals in the profession, we fulfill our obligation to keep operating with total integrity. Optimally, we promise ourselves to refrain from cutting corners. We cheat ourselves when we fail to conduct a thorough search of an area. We deceive ourselves when we do not follow through on investigating things which do not appear to be quite right. Our duty toward self also involves reporting all wrong-doing on the part of staff.

The individual is the building block of trust. If you do not consider yourself trustworthy, then who will?

**Prisoners** - Many would contend that we owe prisoners nothing. That can be an easy attitude to adopt at times. And the phrase, "You've got nothing coming", is universal known in corrections.



However, the truth of the matter is that we have a basic obligation to provide the fair level of services as outlined by policy and procedure. Prisoners deserve an accurate perception of our expectations. If they understand our limits, the institution is safer for everyone. In brief, we owe inmates uniformity of action and enforcement.

This uniformity is the judicious balance between the two evils of coddling and vindictiveness. In short, detached professionalism guided by policy is prudent. It produces an environment where we are neither too soft nor too hard on inmates.

**Co workers** – Trust is out the window whenever events involving 'dirty staff' come to the fore. Maintaining positive staff relations is difficult enough in ordinary times. However, it becomes strained when one of our own betrays us.

In times like those, all staff have an obligation to mend the rift. No matter the work assignments, years of seniority, or philosophical outlook, we all have to rebuild when reliance in each other is strained. Rebuilding trust between our colleagues takes time. But it is a necessary maintenance.

**Society** – It has been said before that the 99 days that nothing goes wrong in a prison is the 99 days that the public will not acknowledge. But, public perception is built on the events that shake our perception. People judge facilities and the profession as a whole based on scandals, budget fights, assaults, and escapes. Though that may not seem fair to corrections, it has to be accepted as the truth.

Therefore, our fundamental obligation to society is to maintain a safe facility. The public does not want to think about corrections. It is in our best interest to operate in an efficient, safe, and unobtrusive manner.

The public may never present us with overflowing, overt appreciation. But we must realize that we operate best when we are invisible.

Fiscal responsibility is another issue of trust. The public expects that we will not squander resources in our daily operation. In times of fiscal difficulty, the public demands that we find safe manners to eliminate costly redundancies.

Working in the corrections profession is not always easy. There are pressures from all angles. The temptation to cut corners is omnipresent. But our actions cast long shadows. In sum, doing the right thing is elementary for establishing and maintaining trust. Trust is the oil and it is fundamental to prevent the engine of corrections from grinding and wearing down.

## **MCA EXECUTIVE BOARD ELECTIONS**

Elections will be held this fall for several officer and trustee positions on the MCA Executive Board. This is your chance to help steer MCA in the right direction and shape MCA into an even better association of corrections professionals. We need the best and brightest to help out and make the commitment. If you are an MCA member in good standing for the past two years and are interested please contact MCA at 1-800-455-9906 or via e-mail at [michcorrassoc@hotmail.com](mailto:michcorrassoc@hotmail.com).



## **CURRENT MCA EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS**

President:	Rich Johnson	Trustee:	John Cordell
Vice President:	Mike Curley	Trustee:	Jim McMeekin
Past President:	Michelle VanDusen	Trustee:	Rev. John Niemela
Treasurer:	Raymond Ball	Trustee:	Anthony Owen
Recording Sec.:	Cheryl Bradshaw	Trustee:	Kip Smith
Financial Sec.:	Barb Slovisky	Trustee:	Jeanine Winger
Trustee:	Joe Bouchard		

## **NOTES:**

If you have anything that you would like to see in the *MCA Today*, please e-mail John Cordell at [cordeljic@michigan.gov](mailto:cordeljic@michigan.gov). Thanks to TJF Printing and everyone who assisted with the publication and content of the Spring 2006 edition.



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## STAFF DIVISION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

PRESENTED BY THE  
MICHIGAN CORRECTIONS ASSOCIATION

### Conference Information and Agenda

There is a horrible monster lurking in every correctional facility. It exists in the smallest county lock-up, the largest maximum security facility, and in all institutions in between. From Florida to Alaska, no one is entirely immune from this parasitical agent of debilitation. This is a pestilence that will strengthen and multiply as long as it is unchecked.

It is **staff division** in your workplace.

This hardy predator feasts on camaraderie and causes a long list of problems such as, extended sick leave, harassment suits, and manipulation by prisoners. With pervasive division there will be a greater use of stress leave, loss of veteran staff, squandered recruitment and training costs, and lowered morale. Quite simply, staff division breeds factors that make your facility less safe.

Yet, it is a treatable disease. There are ways to inoculate you and your staff from its ill effects. In Staff Division and Conflict Resolution, discover the many types of staff dividers and the damage that they do. Find out the many strategies to mitigate this universal challenge to all work sites. Learn how Conflict Resolution can help save your workplace from the deadly rhythm of disunity.

**Date: June 23 2006**

**Place: Sault Ste. Marie, MI**

**Presenters:**

- **Mike Plourde**, Institutional Training Officer at Alger Maximum Correctional Facility. Mike has over 27 years with the Michigan Department of Corrections.
- **Joe Bouchard**, Librarian at Baraga Maximum Correctional Facility within the Michigan Department of Corrections since 1993, member of the Board of Experts for *The Corrections Professional* and instructor of Corrections and Psychology for Gogebic Community College.

**\*Training Credit is available for certified law enforcement officers through MITN and to MDOC employees as a professional conference.**

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**The Michigan Corrections Association Presents:  
"Staff Division and Conflict Resolution"  
Seminar Registration Form**

**Date:** June 23, 2006

**Place:** Sault Ste. Marie, MI

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

(Your registration verification will be sent to this e-mail address)

Worksite \_\_\_\_\_ Membership Number \_\_\_\_\_

**Seminar Prices:** The conference price includes attendance, continental breakfast, lunch, and a mid-afternoon snack.

**Prices**

- \$ 35 member
- \$ 45 non-member
- \$ 55 includes membership

**Make Checks Payable to:** Michigan Corrections Association

**Credit Card Payment:**

- Visa       MasterCard       Other \_\_\_\_\_

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Card Security Number \_\_\_\_\_

(This is a three digit number on the back of most cards, or a four digit number on the front of the AMEX card.)

**Please send payment to:** Michigan Corrections Association  
P.O. Box 12021  
Lansing, MI 48901-2021

**\*\*\*Summer Seminar Registration Form:** Please Complete and Return to MCA for Guaranteed Inclusion in the Summer Training Seminar. The deadline to pre-register is June 16, 2003. On-site registration will be available at the event.