

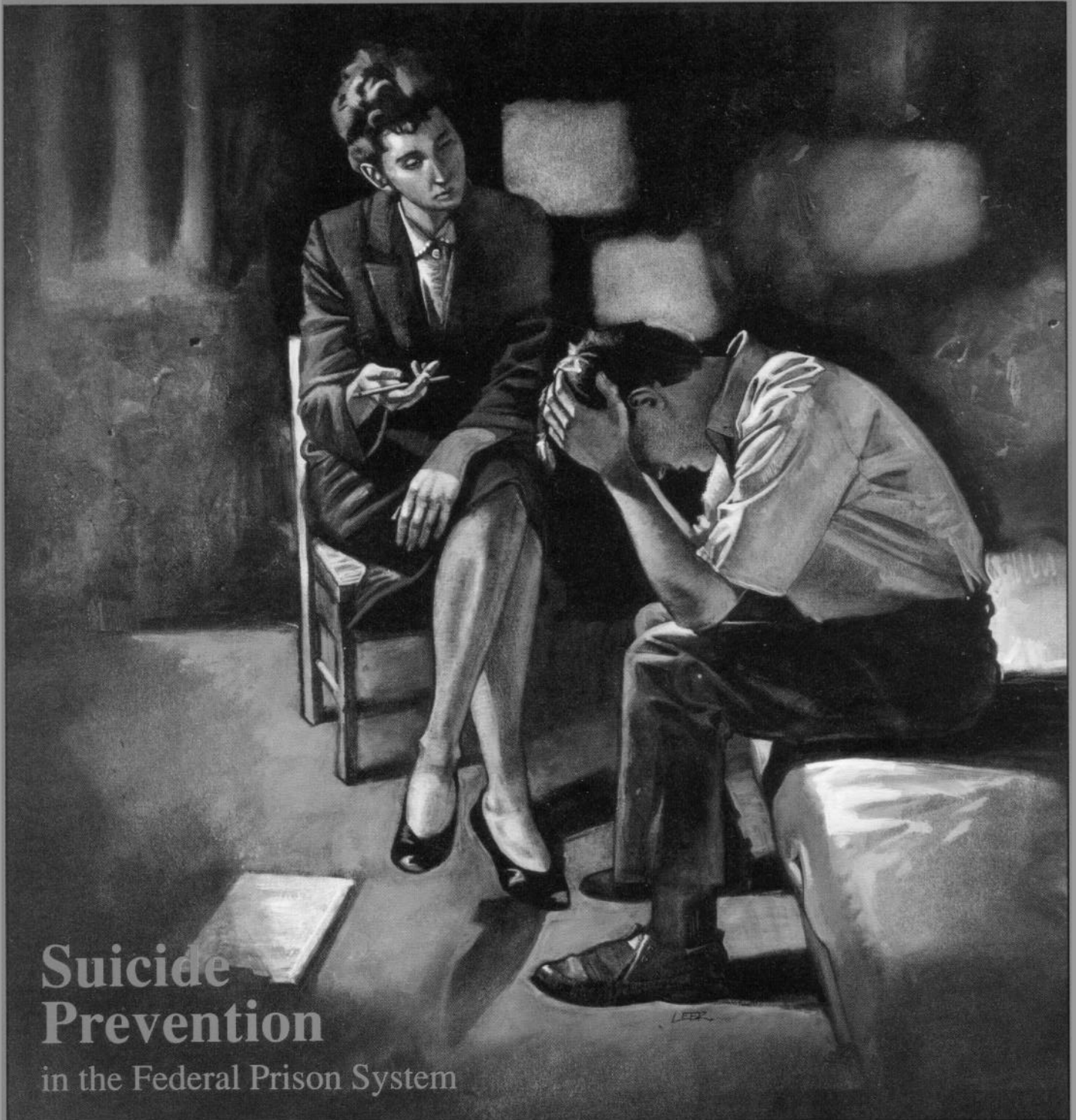


# Federal Prisons

## JOURNAL

VOL. 1, NO. 1

SUMMER 1989



**Suicide  
Prevention**  
in the Federal Prison System

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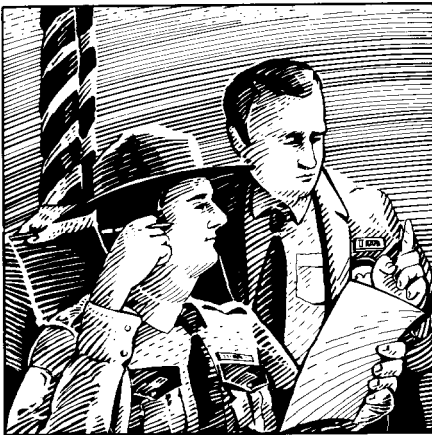
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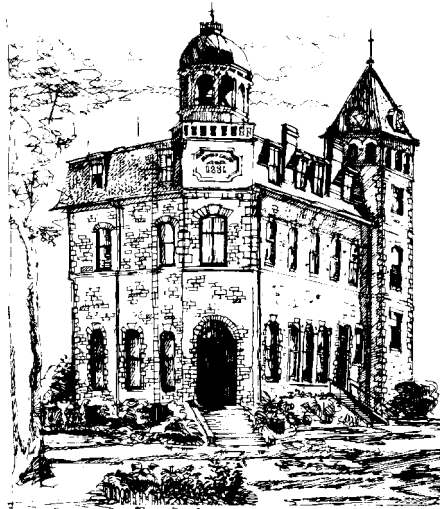
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# Federal Prisons

## JOURNAL

Published quarterly by the  
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**J. Michael Quinlan**  
Director

**James B. Jones**  
Chief, Office of Public Affairs

**Richard Phillips**  
Chief of Communications



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## Let us hear from you...

We hope you will find the *Federal Prisons Journal* useful in your professional work and interesting to read. We want to reach not only the 14,000 men and women who work within the Federal Prison System and Federal Prison Industries, but their colleagues in State and local correctional systems and in other parts of the justice system.

Because this is a new magazine, and a new outreach effort on the part of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, we're particularly interested in your reactions to our first issue. Feedback at this early stage will help us shape the magazine in the direction that will make it most useful to you. In addition, we're wide open for article ideas, and they don't have to be confined to the Federal system.

Please write to the Editor, *Federal Prisons Journal*, at the address on this page. If you want to talk to us, we're at 202-724-3198. We're particularly interested in your responses to the following questions:

What article did you find most interesting? Why?

What article did you find least interesting? Why?

Were any articles too long or too short?

Were any articles too difficult or too easy to read?

What topics would you like to see treated in future issues?



**Office of the Attorney General**  
**Washington, D. C. 20530**

TO THE READERS OF THE FEDERAL PRISONS JOURNAL:

I am pleased to be able to speak to you through the first issue of the Federal Prisons Journal. The Department of Justice is particularly pleased to support this publication not only because it will be a valuable vehicle for personal and professional growth, but also because of the increasing importance of the role of corrections in our criminal justice system.

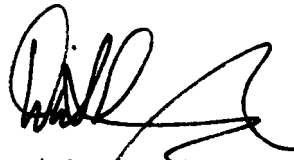
As you know, President Bush announced in his new Crime Bill that he is prepared to commit increased resources to expand the federal criminal justice system to meet his crime-fighting initiatives. The President and I are both committed to increasing the nation's ability to arrest, prosecute, and imprison those who would break the law. Under the President's plan the federal prison system's capacity would be enlarged by 24,000 beds. Obviously, correction professionals will have increased responsibility in our war against crime and drugs.

As the corrections system grows, those who make it work must communicate with each other, with opinionmakers, and with the public. The voices of professional correctional workers must also be heard in the national debate over issues of crime and justice.

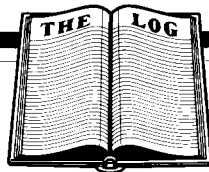
The Federal Prisons Journal provides a forum for these discussions: I urge your active participation through your submissions and feedback.

The Federal Prisons Journal will also be an opportunity to present to the nation a view of the problems facing the correctional system today. It is important to get the message out about the resourcefulness and professionalism of correctional workers in providing a vital public service -- safe, secure, and humane institutions -- often under difficult circumstances.

I salute you.



Dick Thornburgh  
Attorney General



## On the Modern Correctional Officer

Mike Grotfend

By many measures, we are an invisible profession because the people we serve rarely, if ever, see us at work. We live “on the edge”—crossing daily between “normal” society and the inmate world.

Sadly, correctional officers die in the line of duty. Too often, the fate of our fallen comrades has gone unnoticed. Hundreds of others have been injured on the job. On their behalf, we dedicate ourselves to the goal of raising the level of the public’s awareness of who we are and what we do.

We find ourselves in what has unfortunately become a growth industry. Given the choice, we would welcome a downturn in the industry if it meant that crime is on the decline. Clearly, that is not a likely situation in the short run. On the contrary—correctional facilities are bulging at the seams, representing a failure of our Nation to find ways to reduce crime. New facilities are filled as quickly as they are built. It is important to realize that these facilities will not be self-administering. Thoughtful administrators and political leaders recognize that they must identify and train sufficient personnel to staff these institutions and offer compensation, benefits, and recognition for a job well done.

We note, too, that some influential administrators are preparing to embrace the notion that corrections work can be turned over to “for profit” organizations, a trend that we view with alarm. On behalf of our members



Illustrations by Web Bryant

and the entire profession, we condemn that notion. Crime and its consequences are a problem of the entire society.

If there is one governmental function that cannot be relegated to contractors, it is incarceration. We urge the Nation’s lawmakers and public administrators to join with us in declaring a commitment to fulfilling this public obligation as a governmental function.

It is important, therefore, that the Nation recognizes the unique contribution correctional officers make to society. It is our role to provide humane incarceration and custodial protection for inmates and to serve the public by keeping those who have perpetrated crime segregated from the law-abiding.

The concept of corrections, rather than punishment, is often overlooked in the

discussion of crime. But, clearly, as long as we believe that criminal behavior can be changed and the individuals who engage in it are to be discouraged, we must remember that the role of correctional officers is more than simply to act as a “turnkey,” keeping criminals behind bars and invisible from the rest of society. Successful corrections programs rely on highly motivated, well trained, and dedicated corrections professionals.

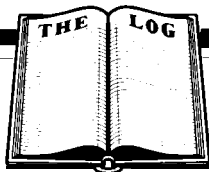
That is why we stress the complex nature of the modern correctional officer’s role. He or she must be trained and educated, prepared to respond appropriately in a crisis, and dedicated to public service—tough yet compassionate. Most of all, the correctional officer must believe that society and the employer value the contributions he or she makes.

*Mike Grotfend is President of the Council of Prison Locals, American Federation of Government Employees. He works at the Federal Correctional Institution, Oxford, Wisconsin. A different version of this article appeared in Oxford Blues, the newsletter of AFGE Local 3495.*

## Don’t Just Do Something...Stand There (and Think About It)

Warren J. Welsh, Ph.D.

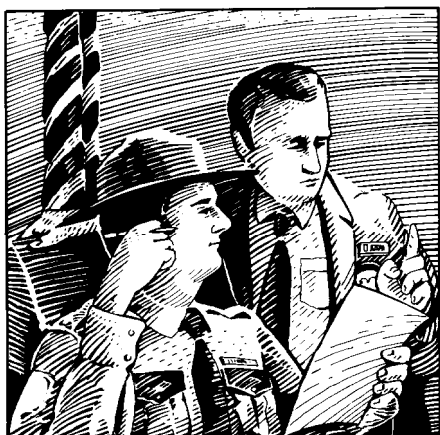
Years ago at an educational seminar, a speaker reminded the listeners that if the railroad companies had been as interested in transportation as they had been in railroads, they’d now own the airlines. The speaker’s point? Teach-



ers must not limit their involvement in the educational process to “classroom technology.” Instead, they must be concerned with the total process of education.

The same point is appropriate for correctional workers like us. If we limit our horizons to the cellblock, we’ll most certainly fall out of step with the times. Though many of us can remember when “sex was dirty and the air was clean,” such simplicity is long gone. In the atmosphere, we have holes in the ozone; in corrections, we can no longer just lock up inmates, work them, feed them, and release them when their time is up. Quite apart from social, moral, or political concerns, pure numbers force us to rethink our approach. We have simply run out of places to put them.

The time has come to replace double- and triple-bunking with completely new methods of carrying out our mission. The Curfew Parole Program (electronic monitoring of “inmates” sentenced to “house arrest”) is an example of what can happen when we are forced to think about what we’re



doing—looking at the forest instead of individual trees.

Our “forest” is more than the field of corrections. It covers the whole criminal justice system from the theories of the classroom to the realities of the cellblock. A pervasive sense of “territoriality” has left huge gaps between the legislature making the laws, the police enforcing the laws, the courts sanctioning lawbreakers, and the prisons managing the results. Our mission in the Bureau of Prisons is neither to make laws nor convict lawbreakers. However, novel as the idea may seem, it is time to enlarge our horizons and begin to voice our ideas and concerns about legislation, enforcement, and sanctioning as well as incarceration.

The first step is communication. Legislators, judges, police officers, parole officers, correctional workers, educators, everyone involved in any aspect of criminal justice must begin talking to each other about what each is doing, while thinking about the effect it has on the rest of the system. It is not unusual for the various components of the system to be working at odds. If we don’t talk, we can only assume everyone else is doing “just fine.”

One of the most important reasons for communication is the need to know the problems in other areas. Unfortunately, many have the attitude that to admit a problem is to admit weakness and incompetence. Thus, we display a “can do” attitude, even when, if we thought about it, we’d realize we were in a “can’t do” situation. Positive attitudes are admirable, as long as they don’t lead to self-deception. It’s always better to be right about not

being able to do the job, than wrong about being able to do it.

The Bureau can no longer remain unconcerned about such issues as zero tolerance, alternative sentencing, decriminalization of drugs, disparity in sentencing, prisons for profit, illegal aliens, gun control, police corruption, and so on. We all need to be talking to each other. This will help elevate our involvement with criminal justice from the “provincialism” of the prisons to the professionalism of the widest possible field of view.

*Dr. Warren J. Welsh is Chief of Psychology Services at the Federal Correctional Institution in Milan, Michigan.*

## Seven Tips for Improving Your Newsletters

*Doug Green*

Every institution has a newsletter, but that by itself doesn’t tell you much. The newsletters are as diverse as the institutions themselves. They range from a single typewritten page to full-color printed booklets with artwork and photographs.

Even with all this diversity, there is—or should be—a common underlying principle. A good newsletter is one that *communicates*—that gets its message across to its audience. That means you have to be clear about both the message and the audience; everything else is secondary. The following tips are meant to improve your communicating.



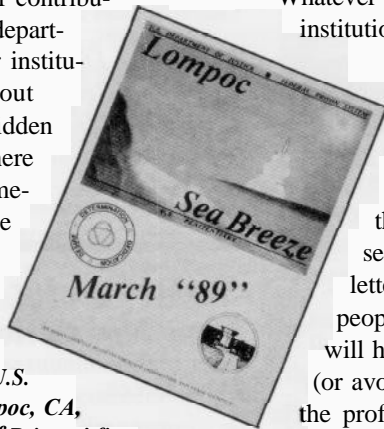
### **Stress people, not programs**

Do people read your newsletter because they want to learn about new initiatives in the Regional Office or where the warden is off to next week? Partly. But they really want to know about their friends and colleagues, and to keep up with what's going on in their immediate work environment.

### **The more people involved, the better**

One person should be in charge of the newsletter, but that person should involve as many others as possible. Try to get regular contributors from every department within your institution—and find out about people's hidden talents. Somewhere within your perimeter are at least one cartoonist and one poet.

*The Sea Breeze, newsletter of the U.S. Penitentiary, Lompoc, CA, won the Bureau of Prisons' first institution newsletter contest in 1989.*



### **Keep it simple**

People often confuse "good" with "expensive" or "fancy." Not so. You can put a great publication together with a typewriter and some Elmer's glue—no color or typesetting or computer graphics necessary—if you're providing people with something they need to read. Concentrate on that first, then start tinkering to improve your design and readability.

### **Have it proofread**

Proofreading is something you never notice when it's done right, but you

certainly notice when it's done badly. People don't like having their names misspelled or their titles garbled.

When they work hard on articles for the newsletter, they like to see their work come out as they wrote it. A simple misspelling can quickly change the meaning (it's the difference between "great" and "grate"). Find someone in your institution who can spell and punctuate—then don't ever let him or her leave.

### **Don't reinvent the wheel**

Whatever you're doing for your institution has been done before—probably at another institution. If you aren't already receiving them, write to all the institutions in your region—in the Nation, for that matter—and get them to send you copies of their newsletters. Looking at other people's successes (and failures) will help you know what to borrow (or avoid). And take note of how the professionals do it—go to the library and look at a few magazines. There are quite a few useful books on editing and design—E.B. White's *The Elements of Style* is a classic for the former; anything by Jan White will help you with the latter.

### **Get outside help if you need it**

Most Bureau people have never had occasion to learn anything about publications design or how to edit. But there are people in your community who do know—your local paper, for instance, or your town's print shop—and usually they'll be happy to share their knowledge. You might talk to them about setting up a course in effective writing for staff while you're at it. Of course, if there's a UNICOR

printing plant at your institution, you'll have considerable expertise in-house.

### **Spend a little to save a lot**

One of the best things about computers is that they allow an individual to do much of the work of a print shop—with no greater investment of time than you'd spend at a typewriter. If your institution is upgrading its microcomputers, for instance, why not piggyback the costs and invest in a desktop publishing system, such as PageMaker or ReadySetGo? You'll be amazed at how much time you'll save, and how dramatic the improvement in quality will be.

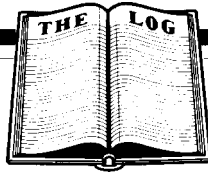
*Doug Green is editor of the Federal Prisons Journal. He has edited far too many newsletters.*

## **Heart Healthy Nutrition: Changing Diets, Changing Habits**

*Jerry Collins*

In recent years more and more Americans have been concerned with health and fitness. This trend has carried over into the field of corrections. The old philosophy of nutrition in correctional settings could well be characterized as "keep them fat and happy." But this is no longer acceptable. Both inmates and staff are becoming much more conscious of the nutritional qualities of the foods being provided at institutions.

As health costs continue to spiral for prisons as for the rest of society, good nutrition becomes a form of preventive medicine. The effects of diet on



psychological states are not well understood, but it's reasonable to suppose that an unbalanced diet—one heavy in fats, sugar, and salt—can reinforce tendencies to “act out.”

### Heart Healthy Meals

The birth of Heart Healthy Meals took place in the Bureau of Prisons in fall 1988. Heart Healthy Meals are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans developed to promote healthy nutritional behavior. Heart Healthy Meals are also compliant with the Recommended Dietary Allowances (RDA's), developed to meet the known nutritional needs of practically all healthy Americans. The guidelines address overeating, and recommend reaching a desirable weight that you can maintain, reducing consumption of fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol, eating a variety of foods, eating an adequate amount of starch and fiber by increasing the intake of grains, fruits, and vegetables, and decreasing intake of sugar and salt.

Providing healthier meals need not require major alterations to your institution's current menus. Initially,

the emphasis should be on providing additional choices for those interested in healthier eating. Some effective Heart Healthy alternatives are:

- Provide a hot or cold fiber-rich cereal at breakfast.
  - Offer lowfat (2 percent) and skim milk in place of whole milk.
  - Limit eggs to no more than three servings a week—and not always fried.
  - Prepare vegetables without salt or butter, which can be added at the table.
- P** Offer a baked alternative when the main entree is fried—baked chicken along with the fried chicken, for instance.
- Offer fresh or canned fruit as the main dessert.
  - Offer margarine as an alternative to butter.

Many Bureau institutions have already implemented these simple changes and found them to be well received by their inmate population.

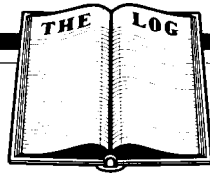
- Jerry Heftler, Food Service Administrator at FCI Fort Worth, started providing lowfat (2 percent) milk and was then asked if skim milk could be provided. Jerry started with three 5-gallon containers of skim milk and now orders 15 containers a week. Skim milk is now offered in many institutions to the general population, not just to inmates on therapeutic diets.

- Phil Bradshaw, Food Service Administrator at MCFP Springfield, initially started preparing 25 servings of a baked entree as an alternative to fried meats. In just a couple of weeks the demand increased to 150 portions. Springfield's alternative entrees are identified on the menu board and are available upon request.

- Salad bars have provided inmates an excellent and popular choice for Heart Healthy eating. In the past few years, at the majority of institutions, salads have changed from a simple bowl of lettuce to the opportunity to create your own salad with a wide variety of items. The salad bar provides inmates with a rare enough opportunity in institutions—the opportunity to select their personal preferences. Inmates wishing to eat light can do so; those seeking an alternative to meat, fish, and poultry can find protein substitutes on many salad bars in the form of cheese, cottage cheese, garbanzo beans, or a bean salad.

- Dual entrees have also added to inmate choices. Walt Breeden, former Food Service Administrator at USP Lompoc, offered a dual entree to the inmates consisting of a meat entree and a meatless entree in the form of a soy protein dish. John Scozzafava, former Food Service Administrator at FCI Danbury, made his second entree a





Heart Healthy choice. As stated earlier, other institutions are preparing an entree two different ways—fried and baked.

### Changing habits through education

As many perpetual dieters know, changing your eating habits is not easy. Educating yourself about the content of what you eat is a start. Grace Rodgers, the Bureau of Prisons' Chief Dietitian, and the field dietitians are developing material to promote healthier eating behavior among inmates. For instance, to educate the general population, a Nutrition Corner Bulletin Board has been developed to provide information for inmates supporting Heart Healthy Food choices. The first Nutrition Corner display was the "Weight, Height, and Longer Life Chart," which showed the ideal weight for height and frame size, followed by proper portion sizes to maintain a desirable weight.

Nutrition education begins on the serving line, where, as in the outside world, the "customers" are likely to make some last-minute decisions. Some simple reinforcers can greatly increase the success of the program.

- Menu boards are an excellent tool for teaching healthy eating. This fall a new Bureau policy will be implemented requiring menu boards to list the calories, sodium, and cholesterol in each food item.

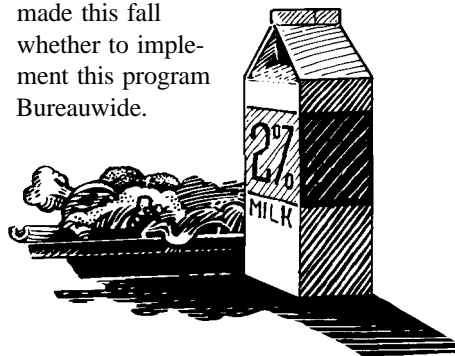
- Another "home remedy" to make inmates more aware of what and how they eat is a scale. Several institutions have a scale available in the dining room for inmates who want to monitor their weight.

- A full-length mirror placed at the entrance of the dining room has proved to be excellent for making people aware of how they look, thus hopefully affecting what they eat.

### Supporting field initiatives

To date, the success of the Bureau's Heart Healthy Meals program has come from a close collaboration between Central Office and the institutions. Grace Rodgers has met with institutional food service administrators at two regional conferences, and the regional administrators and field dietitians have been very supportive. Individual food service administrators have also undertaken a number of initiatives:

- FCI Fort Worth is piloting a new concept—therapeutic diets. Food service staff, medical staff, and the contract dietitian are working together to provide inmates requiring special diets with counseling and educational materials to enable them to make healthier choices from mainline foods. The medical staff continues to monitor inmates' conditions during this pilot program. A final determination will be made this fall whether to implement this program Bureauwide.



- Tom Issermoyer, Food Service Administrator at FCI Memphis, feeds diabetic patients from the main line after they are taught the exchange

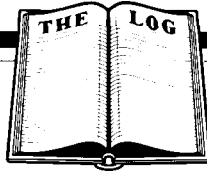
system for meal selection by the Nutrition Health Educator.

- Carl Vitanza, Food Service Administrator at FCI Otisville, and the education department have incorporated nutrition training into the institution's prerelease program.

The Bureau of Prisons' farms have also been very supportive of the Heart Healthy program. A year ago they were informed of the goal to provide healthier foods; the farms then upgraded their milk processing equipment to provide lowfat milk to their customers. In addition, USP Lompoc is currently breeding their beef herd with leaner cattle of limousin stock, in an attempt to provide a healthier cut of meat for inmates in the Western Region.

Intensified nutrition training for food service administrators is planned for 1990 at the National Food Service Administrators Conference and at the Food Management Training Center. The results of this training will be tracked through future nutritional analysis of Bureau menus and will benefit the inmate population through promoting preventive health care. The inmate nutrition education program, and the clinical nutrition education program for the population at nutritional risk for chronic disease, will be key components in the success of Heart Healthy eating.

*Jerry Collins is Food and Farm Services Administrator for the Federal Bureau of Prisons.*



## Mandatory Literacy for Prisons

*Sylvia McCollum*

When Warren E. Burger was Chief Justice of the United States, he had a strong interest in prison education programs. In a speech to George Washington University graduates in 1981, he urged education for all inmates so that, at a minimum, all would be literate and have a saleable skill. Just 5 days later, Norman A. Carlson, then Director of the Bureau of Prisons, appointed a task force to advise him regarding the policy implications of the Chief Justice's speech.

Within a year, the Bureau established its first mandatory adult basic education policy, incorporating the following points:

- Inmates functioning at less than 6th-grade level (as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test, or SAT) were required to enroll in an adult basic literacy (ABE) program for 90 days.
- Inmates could not be promoted to jobs above the lowest level until they met the 6th-grade standard.
- Each institution had to develop a "needs list" to follow each inmate's progress (or lack of progress), including 30-day reviews and counseling sessions.
- Institutions also had to develop a system of incentives and awards to recognize satisfactory progress.

That both staff and inmates so readily accepted the mandatory literacy program came as a surprise to many. One question was whether inmates who had verified high school diplomas and college degrees should be required to take the SAT. Early on, the decision was made to test all new admissions, since there was evidence that many who had such diplomas and degrees functioned below the 6th-grade level on SAT subtests.

Some inmates thought they were too old to learn enough to meet the new standards. Others had enrolled in past literacy programs and failed only one or two of the SAT subtests. These cases were handled on an individual basis; work promotions were occasionally allowed if the inmates continued in the ABE program and made satisfactory progress.

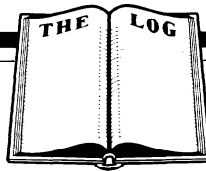
The impact of the new policy on the number of ABE enrollments and completions was substantial, as shown

in the table. Population increased 54 percent, while ABE completions increased 327 percent! We believe that the compulsory nature of the program and its tie to work promotion accounts for this accomplishment.

Constant monitoring has been an important characteristic of the Bureau's literacy effort. There was consensus that problems should be quickly addressed. Thus, in October 1983, the policy was amended to require each institution to have either a qualified reading specialist or a special education instructor on staff, as the average classroom teacher did not always have the necessary skills.

After 3 years, it became apparent that the 6th-grade level was not high enough to meet employers' rising expectations and comparable community standards. In July 1985, a pilot program was initiated in the Northeast Region to test the establishment of the 8th grade as the new standard; a year





## Adult Basic Education Program, 1981-86

	81	82	83	84	85	86	Increase 81-86
BOP							
Avg. daily population	24,933	27,730	29,718	30,723	33,263	38,402	13,469
New enrollments	2,653	3,785	6,004	6,896	8,048	9,000 est	6,347
Completions	1,441	1,983	3,774	4,909	5,221	6,161	4,720
% Incr. over prev. yr.— Completions	—	37.6	90.3	30.1	6.4	18.0	327.6
% Incr. over prev. yr.—Pop.	—	11.2	7.25	3.4	8.3	14.2	54.0

Note: A new Education Data System was established in 1987; data for FY 1987 and 1988 are not yet available.

later, that standard became nationwide. Last year, the SAT—originally designed for use with children—was replaced by the Adult Basic Level Examination (ABLE) as the qualifying test.

The consensus we have reached in the Bureau echoes that of the private sector—a literate worker is a better worker. The literacy program is almost universally supported by line staff as well as managers. We attribute this success to two major factors:

- The connection between literacy achievement and wages and promotions. The difference between a UNICOR entry-level grade of 22 cents an hour and the top grade of \$1.10 an hour is a significant motivator. And both inmates and staff immediately understood and accepted the realities of the outside job market.

- The increased availability of computer-aided instruction. Computers are perfect for drill and practice, and allow staff to manage enlarged enrollments without losing one-on-one contact. More than 600 personal computers are now in use throughout the system.

Eight States have some form of mandatory literacy program, with standards ranging from the 4th to the 8th grade. A few others have mandatory requirements under certain conditions in particular institutions. These States' experience tends to support the Bureau's. Its positive experience with mandatory literacy has encouraged the Bureau to consider expanding the concept. A 1-year pilot program in the Southeast Region field-tested the requirement of a high school diploma or GED for promotions to top jobs; we anticipate establishing this requirement nationwide in 1989.

The mandatory GED program is taking place at the same time as the Federal prison population is exploding. Instead of competing for inmate time, education programs are increasingly viewed as necessary to meet increases in available inmate time. Job opportunities for educated ex-offenders may well increase as businesses have difficulty finding skilled entry-level workers. These factors make mandatory education more important than ever.

The bottom line, as always in education, is the classroom teacher and education manager. The literacy program in the Federal Prison System is one of their crowning achievements.

*Sylvia McCollum is Director of Education of the Federal Bureau of Prisons. An expanded version of this article will appear in the Yearbook of Correctional Education, 1989, published by Oxford University Press.*

