

Corrections Foundation
Board of Directors Meeting
Friday, February 25, 2011
Sago Palm Re-Entry Center – Pahokee, FL

Attendees:

Mr. Louie L. Wainwright, President
Mr. Dave Mecusker, Treasurer
Mr. Jim Williams, Finance and Membership Committees Chair
Ms. Betty Bennett
Ms. Gail Reddick
Mr. Robert Woody
Mr. Jason Clinger
Mr. Dick Pearce

Absent:

Mr. Tom Rush, Vice President
Col. Butch Redding
Ms. Rosa McNaughton
Ms. Mary Ellen Dayan-Varnum

Special Guests:

Mr. David Harris, Region IV Director for Institutions
Mr. Robert Shannon, Warden - Glades CI
Ms. Jenny Nimer, Assistant Secretary for Community Corrections
Ms. Beth Atkinson, Region III Director for Community Corrections
Ms. Roslyn Baker, Circuit Administrator, West Palm Beach Circuit
Ms. Maria DiBernardo, Circuit Administrator, Miami Circuit

Staff:

Mr. Chris Akins
Ms. Sheri Logue

President Louie Wainwright called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. He thanked Warden Shannon and Major Kibler for making the arrangements for the meeting and thanked everyone in attendance. Mr. Jim Williams gave the invocation. Mr. Dave Mecusker took attendance and a quorum was established. Mr. Wainwright thanked the board members for making plans to join us and indicated that we had wanted to come to Region IV for a long time and this was our first meeting in this area.

Mr. Wainwright asked Mr. Williams to tell the audience about his role in the Corrections Foundation and about our mission. Mr. Williams stated that he was a 37 year volunteer with the Florida Department of Corrections and he was close friends with Wilson Bell, a founding board

member. He indicated that years ago they began to talk about what they could do for DC staff. In the early 90's nothing was available to support staff in need so they set out to get approval from the legislature to establish a Direct Support Organization to serve the Florida Department of Corrections. So, they drafted a bill and in 1996 the bill passed and the Corrections Foundation became incorporated. Mr. Williams stated that the first few years were slow with a \$75,000 budget. They received grant funds for inmate programs and the program began to grow and operating expenses were covered by these grants. He further indicated that in 2001 Mr. Wainwright joined the Foundation as the President, bringing credibility to the Foundation's mission to serve DC.

Mr. Williams went on to say that membership only costs \$1.00 bi-weekly and last year the Foundation provided \$508,000 to employees in need. Since 2001, we have provided \$4 million in assistance. Many people still think that the hardships we assist in will never happen to them and the truth is that no one ever expects to have a critical illness or crisis occur in their lives, but they happen and the Corrections Foundation is there for employees when they do.

Mr. Williams indicated to the audience that the Foundation only has four part-time staff members but they get so much done with very low overhead. The Foundation is very fortunate to have the phenomenal staff that they do. Administrative cost is extremely low compared to most non-profits that charge 15-30%; our operating cost is less than 10% of our annual budget.

Mr. Williams stated that the Corrections Foundation was the first 501(c)3 authorized in the United States to serve Corrections. Other states have copied what we do and our new Secretary, Mr. Edwin Buss, established a similar organization in Indiana so he understands the mission of the Corrections Foundation. He encouraged staff to educate their employees about the Corrections Foundation and how just \$26 a year can impact so many lives.

Mr. Williams said how privileged they were to have Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright in attendance today. Also, he indicated how appreciative the board was to those that prepared the great lunch they had today.

At this point, each of the Foundation's Board Directors in attendance introduced themselves. Mr. Robert Woody stated he had retired from the Department of Corrections after 30 years. His most recent position was in Central Office as the Director of Community Relations. He is currently the Director of Jails in Alachua County and he has been on the Board for 7-8 years.

Mr. Dick Pearce stated that was a Program Manager for Probation and Parole in Central Florida and has been on the board for 4 years. He commented on what a privilege it was to serve on the Corrections Foundation board.

Mr. Jason Clinger introduced himself and stated he was a Psychological Specialist at Lake Correctional Institution. He's been with the Department of Corrections for 14 years. He has been on the board for 5 years and is honored to serve DC.

Mr. Dave Mecusker stated that had retired in 2008 after 37 years with DC. He worked all over the state and retired as Assistant Warden at Lawtey Correctional Institution. He indicated that he felt honored to have remained on the board of directors after his retirement. He serves as treasurer for the board and is now the City Manager for Lake Butler. He stated that the city council there recognizes the importance of supporting Corrections and they are in full support of Mr. Mecusker's participation on the Board.

He conveyed that the Corrections Foundation was there for DC and they could read some of the thank you letters we receive those staff members that we assist that they would see the impact their membership dues have on their fellow officers and employees in need.

Ms. Gail Reddick introduced herself as the "Baby of the Board" having joined the Board less than a year ago. She conveyed that the Corrections Foundation was there to help all of DC and that it was a privilege to serve on the Board of Directors.

Board Director, Ms. Betty Bennett, indicated that she had retired from DC after working 28 years in Probation and Parole. She left the department to work for a pharmaceutical company and after retiring from there she has continued to be very involved in Corrections. Ms. Bennett noted that she had grown up in Bradford County close to FSP and that she understood that Corrections was a family and she was proud to serve on the Corrections Foundation board because it gives you the opportunity to serve that family.

Mr. Mecusker presented the financial report focusing on income and expenses to date. The Foundation's fiscal year runs from July 1 – June 30. He stated that it was noteworthy to mention that \$366,000 had been provided to employees in need through the Employee Assistance program and that \$30,290 has been raised through golf tournaments.

Mr. Mecusker indicated that Employee assistance made up our largest distribution of funds with \$271,485 given to date. Our Net income is 105,133.64. Unrestricted funds are \$55,950.52 and designated funds are \$419,684.49. The operating account has a balance of \$245,334.93, the money market account has a balance of \$120,610.46 and the certificate of deposit of \$230,295.08 shows we are in very good shape managing funds for benefit of employees and we are in a position to help if disaster should strike. Florida and the Dept. of Corrections are very fortunate to not have experienced and major hurricanes in the last few years but the Foundation is prepared to assist should a catastrophic event occur.

It was also stated that of the funds that come in from employee membership, 90% is returned to employees in need. No monies received from employee membership are used for inmate programs. Grant monies are received and used for inmate programs and 10% of all grant funding provides operating support for the Foundation.

Mr. Mecusker asked for any questions from the attendees. With no further discussion, Mr. Robert Woody made a motion to approve the financial report. Mr. Clinger seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Mr. Williams presented the Membership Report drawing attention to the fact that 74% of DC staff is members of the Corrections Foundation. He stated that he understands that the economy has been tough the last few years; however, membership in the Foundation is one of the best investments you can make. No one expects to experience a situation in which they will need assistance, but when those events and illnesses occur the Foundation is here to help. It is imperative for the top level staff to reach the Correctional Officers and let them know what the Foundation does and that we are here as their Foundation to serve them. There are many staff and officers out there who have never heard of the Foundation and there are other organizations out there to join but no one reaches out and helps like we do. Mr. Williams stated that him and Mr. Wainwright would come and make presentations at any of their local meetings. The Foundation Board of Directors is a volunteer board with a passion to serve Corrections officers and staff. Mr. Williams stated that he encouraged staff to take what they had learned today and share it with their staff. The Board wants everyone to have the opportunity to join and they are available for questions anytime. Foundation staff discuss in detail requests that are submitted. If there is a fine line on the criteria they discuss and bend their own rules sometimes so that they can serve each employee personally because every situation is going to be different. The Foundation does not have a cookie cutter approach to requests.

Participation in Region III and Region IV is lower than the rest of the state at 50%. The low membership can be blamed on lack of communication and we are working on improving that.

Ms. Logue mentioned that the membership handout listed each institution and circuit and could give them an idea of where each location stood on membership.

An audience member spoke about how we could better promote the Corrections Foundation to staff. Currently the Corrections Foundation is presented at recruitment and orientation and the new employee is bombarded with so much information at that time that membership is often overlooked. Presenting information at in service training may be a better avenue to reach the line staff. Orientation could be done at every in-service training and the 6 minute video could be shown and brochures provided.

A member that we assisted from SFRC in 2004 addressed the board. He was a recipient for hurricane damage to his home and he has shared his story with staff. He commented that following the Corrections Foundation in the Correctional Compass is a good way to keep up with how your membership is helping others. He added that it is great to be assisted in our time of need and that staff need to know that they have to let their leadership know of hardship situations so that the Corrections Foundation can help. And we have to let staff know help is available so that they will feel free to ask. Your \$26 assists others but when you need help you may receive \$500, \$1500, etc.

Ms. Logue asked the attendees how to best provide information to the field. It was recommended that each institution have a liaison, once a month, set up a table and hand out information at the gate. Not everyone reads the Compass. Provide brochures to Region. Mr. Harris mentioned that if we send info to him, he will distribute to field.

Mr. Dave Mecusker mentioned that when he worked in the field his perception of the Corrections Foundation was very different than what he grew to learn about us when he joined the Board of Directors. He commented that the board is a volunteer board, and with 4 part time paid employees we strive to stretch every dollar to better serve DC. Often at orientation the PBA and insurance companies come in and they are trying to sell you something. We all need insurance but we are not here to sell you anything we are here to clarify what we do and that we are here for you and your staff. He noted that when you have an emergency that happens at your facility, corrections employees rally. They hold BBQ fundraisers and other events to help a fellow employee out. The work that it takes to put on events raises less money while just being a member and requesting assistance from the Corrections Foundation can provide up to \$1500 for situations that fit the criteria. That is why we emphasize that this is your Foundation. You are not trying to sell this, just let employees know what we do. I've seen that supervisors may not submit assistance because of this or that. We ask you not to hold back putting in a request. The Corrections Foundation will determine the circumstances and provide help or not. If DC employees are not a member \$250 is provided, if they are a member \$1500 is provided.

An attendee recommended that the duty wardens have the perfect opportunity to talk to staff one on one about what the Foundation is. Having been a recipient of assistance during a tragedy it is important to know that if you have an employee in need, submit a request. The Foundation cannot assist if they do not know about the situation.

The warden from Hardee CI commented that they have experienced the 2 day turn around in response to tragedy; they have experienced the timely response and have given Corrections Foundation checks to families in crisis. Our employees are sometimes faced with horrible situations such as a 3 year old drowning, a 2 year old with critical health, employees fighting cancer, hurricanes, etc. So many people are helped through tragedy by the Corrections Foundation. It is especially humbling to be in the position to provide the assistance to staff and see the relief. He mentioned that he cannot express the relief employees feel through the Corrections Foundation and added that he promotes and encourages all to be a part of the Foundation and that they are striving for 100% participation at Hardee Correctional Institution.

Ms. Logue asked the attendees to review the Employee Assistance overview and mentioned that the full EAP criteria are on our website. While we are not an insurance company and death related requests, insurance policy issues are not what we do we are involved in medical, serious emergencies, medical bills outside of you insurance policy, routine co pays are not what we assist in, but we look at the critical nature of the request. We are humbled and privileged to do what we

do we see a lot of crisis and heartache. Region I and II have tons of crises, and we do not see as many requests from Region III and IV. She believes lack of knowledge of what we do and employees pride is a large reason for the low number of requests from the Southern Region. Addressing the pride issue is important. Employees should never feel like a welfare recipient for asking for help. Pride is understandable but we do not want employees to feel embarrassed to ask for assistance. We ask for your help to lighten this feeling and help employees feel welcome to request assistance. Requesting help is easy and requires a simple letter to the warden, circuit administrator or supervisor and it is submitted to the Corrections Foundation.

Sometimes a staff member may be home or hospital bound and is unable to write their warden to request assistance therefore others who know the crisis situation can request that a form be submitted on the employee's behalf.

Mr. Mecusker added that we need to emphasize to staff that this is not a death benefit or insurance policy and that it is important to sign up for the state life insurance. He told of a situation we received a request on. The husband was mowing grass and had a heart attack and died. He was a popular employee at the institution and a request was expedited to the Foundation for assistance. What is the critical need? Husband died; and I don't want to sound cold but there were no other medical bills, \$300,000 in life insurance was expedited to the family. The Corrections Foundation denied this request because it was not an emergency. The Corrections Foundation is for situations that are outside of your control, not situations that you can plan for with home, car, life and health insurance. There is a details list of what we assist in and what we do not assist in on our website.

He continued by noting that Employee Assistance not an insurance policy and not a guarantee. Ms. Logue presented the Employee Assistance Report noting that in Region IV, 362 employees had been assisted with \$423,000 and in comparison with other regions it is easy to see the areas that understand the program and know the process. You'll see we have assisted some institutions and circuits more than others. If you let your staff know what we do, we will assist more because more employees will know they can ask in times of crisis. Region III, Region II, Region I have higher levels of assistance than Region IV. Much of the reason is due to education and awareness and that is part of why we are here today. It is important to us to assist all employees in need and we can do that by making all employees aware of what we do and that we exist to help them in emergency situations.

Mr. Wainwright asked Gail Reddick to give us an update on the Corrections Foundation involvement in Circuit 13 Clearwater. She commented that the Corrections Foundation is providing assistance and that staff are coming and asking. She likes that the requests are not determined at the Circuit Administrator level and that they are all forwarded to the Corrections Foundation for review. She added that it is up to supervisors and administrators to not allow this resource sit here. The Corrections Foundation is here for employees and should be utilized.

A sergeant from Region IV who represents us at Everglades CI commented on how the concerns of coming changes, no raises has led to bitterness among employees and they are of the mentality that “they aren’t giving me anything, I’m not signing up for anything.” He added that perhaps he does not have the information and knowledge needed to clearly present on what the Corrections Foundation does. He also noted that a statewide training would be very helpful.

Mr. Mecusker addressed the bitterness issue and noted that looking at the report, in 11 years five people at Dade CI have been assisted. That bitterness of so few being assisted flows better than the assistance that was provided to a few people. We know there has been more people in need in the regions than has been presented to us. Region IV currently has the least assistance provided and the least members. That is the problem we notice and why we are here to ask for your help in correcting the issue at hand and we need DC leaderships help to make this Foundation available to all DC employees.

Mr. Wainwright, recognized Regional Director Region, Mr. Harris to speak on this subject. He noted that he is glad this dialog is coming out. Mr. Mecusker is absolutely correct; it is the responsibility of leadership to get the word out. Region 4 has experienced more tragedy, yet we are the least represented in participation in the Corrections Foundation. Mr. Harris was the warden at SFRC and in the last 3 years there have been major incidents such as staff members murdered. He was able to pick up the phone and call the Corrections Foundation their response, “send us the paperwork.” Assistance was received immediately.

He told all in attendance that they were invited here today to learn and become a mouthpiece for the Corrections Foundation. This is a heart and soul issue. It is about you joining to help others, not about what you may gain. I hope you never need assistance from the CF, but your membership can serve others in critical need.

I know for a fact that more than 23 people were suffering in the last 11 years at SFRC, however that is how many people asked for assistance through the Corrections Foundation. We are here to learn and educate the staff at your institution about the Foundation and what they do. Assistance is on time, not late and it is on time when staff needed it most. There is no red tape involved but we as leadership have to ask for assistance for our employees. It really is as simple as an employee having an issue, presenting it to their supervisor and the supervisor sending to the Corrections Foundation. Let’s make staff aware because it is an injustice on your part not to make this benefit available to our staff.

He continued that change occurs all the time and we need to get used to the change and rise through the adversity. The Corrections Foundation is here. Everyone has a habit and it costs you more than \$26 a year. Membership in the CF is \$26 a year. \$250 non- member vs. \$1500 when you are a member. As mentioned SFRC recently had 2 employees murdered, assistance was provided immediately and it was priceless to be there to present funds to the families of these employees,

recognizing the tragedy and the impact this will have on children and families for some time to come.

The message is this is not about you, it is about someone else. It is about helping someone else. There are 100 plus people here today to be hands and feet for the Corrections Foundation so that we can make this application process available to all staff so that no one in need is left out. Say what the problem is and the Foundation will assist given the situation is within the Employee Assistance Criteria.

Mr. Harris asked all of Region IV's leadership to get on board and move forward about education on the Foundation. We have to talk to staff; we have to know their needs and crisis in their lives. I hope this meeting encourages you to get involved. We appreciate the Foundation so much in Region IV; it is time to utilize its services for all employees in need.

A gentleman made a statement, the Corrections Foundation is not a function of the Dept. of Corrections but it is for the staff of the Dept. of Corrections. It is operated by an independent organization for the benefit of all DC staff in need.

Mr. Harris commented that he hopes he never needs to receive assistance from the CF but he hopes that his membership is available to help someone else. Times are tough but that is why it is so important to support each other through this organization.

Mr. Wainwright noted that insurance premiums, salary reductions, retirement funding, etc. that DC employees are facing has nothing to do with the Corrections Foundation. The Governor and legislature are presenting the situations you are disappointed in. The Corrections Foundation is hopefully something you are proud of. He added that Secretary McNeil was extremely supportive of the Corrections Foundation and that our new Secretary, Edwin Buss is someone he knows from the American Correctional Association. Mr. Wainwright has found him to be a very friendly man who wants to know what is going on before he makes decisions. He added that Mr. Buss is an outstanding guy who has done great things in Indiana and very involved in the American Correctional Association. An article was passed out regarding Secretary Buss.

Mr. Wainwright thanked Mr. Harris for allowing us to be here and thanked Warden Shannon and Major Kibler work of putting this meeting together. A round of applause was offered for their efforts.

Warden Shannon of Glades CI introduced his staff assistant, Ms. Geraldine Massey who gave her testimony of being a recipient of assistance from the Corrections Foundation. "I was a member for a long time; in March 2006 I was visiting my granny in Melbourne, left daughter at her part time job, after work she and a friend went to the beach, at 5:15p.m. serious car accident involving her and her friend. I received a phone call from unknown number, voice on other line, "two children dead. I think one of these children belong to you". I said, "I don't think so, I think you have the

wrong number.” The man called again, restating and describing my daughter. I told him again that he had the wrong number. My sister called and asked where I was. She said, “Go straight to the hospital, Midge is in bad shape.” I believe that phone call was an angel, a response to my faith in believing my daughter was not dead. To the medical staff she was dead; they had covered her up after being thrown out of the car window. They checked her pulse in her broken arm and as far as they were concerned she was dead. I went to the hospital one doctor told me that they had to amputate her arm. I said, “No, with all of the technology you have, that is the easy way out”. I did what I had to do, I prayed. My daughter’s 3 4, 5 and 6 vertebrae were injured, she experienced head trauma, her arm was severed and surgery to save her arm was successful. Through it all and today she has minor pains but she is here and I thank God that she is. I am thankful. I wasn’t thinking of asking the Foundation for help, a friend submitted the request for assistance for me. The assistance I received enabled me to go to all the Dr.’s and to be with my daughter and to be off from work to care for her. I am truly blessed and this is a wonderful organization. People just do not know what a resource the Corrections Foundation is and I encourage everyone to sign up. Thank you for this Foundation. Thank you and God bless you.”

Ms. Nimer arrived and we took a couple minutes to allow our friends from Community Corrections to get settled.

Questions were answered and Ms. Nimer, Assistant Secretary of Community Corrections, Ms. Atchison, Regional Director of Region III, Ms. Roslyn Baker, Palm Beach Circuit Administrator and Ms. Maria DiBernardo addressed the attendees. With a common goal to change offender behavior, Community Corrections will be working closely with institutions and the Parole Commission. Ms. Maria DiBernardo gave testimony on how the Corrections Foundation has aided employees in Circuit 11, thanked the board and staff and encouraged everyone to join and wished us a very successful membership campaign.

The Corrections Foundation video was played for attendees. Sheri Logue mentioned that if anyone would like a copy of the video they can email her and she will provide a copy to them. It is also available on our website, www.correctionsfoundation.org.

Mr. Wainwright ended the meeting by mentioning how extremely pleased we are to be able to meet here today. This is the first time we have had Assistant Secretary, Regional Directors, Wardens, and Circuit Administrators at a board meeting and we are very impressed with the turnout. We are thankful to have lunch provided to us today and paid for through a generous donor. Thank you for coming and providing your support to the Corrections Foundation. The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by Sheri Logue, June 16, 2011.