



DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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Staff, volunteers receive awards from Department of Corrections

Pierre, S.D. –The South Dakota Department of Corrections recognized volunteers and staff members for their service at recognition banquets in Oacoma May 17-18.

Several DOC staff who serve in the military were recognized for their service to their country. They include Art Allcock, Jon Dalen, Jay Decker, Darold Diede, Keith Ditmanson, Roger Flint, Steve Hoiten, Dale Hunhoff, Rustin Johnsen, Chris Knox, Paul Kurle, Dennis Lauseng, Chris Neeb, Shawn Newland, Chris Schoepf and Wallace Wynia from the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls; Adam Myers and Jonathan Dingman from the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield; Clay Rees, Juvenile Corrections Agent and Kris Wachendorf, Parole Agent, both of Sioux Falls and David Clevenger, David Lloyd, Tom Stewart, Billie Bowker, Lee Schroeder, Adam Arechiga, Jeremy Taper and Greg Darlow from the State Treatment and Rehabilitation (STAR) Academy near Custer.

Those receiving volunteer awards include:

Vic and Connie Erlacher, Lemmon;
Pastor Al Peratt, Sioux Falls;
Pastor Bobbie Smith, Sioux Falls;
Ruth Lindeman, Springfield;
Eleanor Toyne, Springfield;
Ted Wechsler, Springfield;
Father Gary Lantz, Pierre;
Sharon Starks, Pierre;
Judge Max Gors, Pierre;
Judge Mark Smith, Pierre;
Former State Representative Chris Madsen, Sioux Falls;
Gail Knudson, Custer;
Pastor Gary Pokorney, Custer;
Pastor Robert Anderson, Custer; and
Sheriff Phil Hesper, Custer.

Those staff members receiving awards includes:

David Lentsch, South Dakota State Penitentiary;

Troy Ponto, South Dakota State Penitentiary;
Sandy Wechsler, Mike Durfee State Prison;
Lt. Marv Engelhaupt, South Dakota Women's Prison;
Jackie Hanson, DOC Administration; and
Gail Myers, Mike Durfee State Prison.

Vic and Connie Erlacher have provided foster care services to DOC youth since 1998, taking 19 youth into their home over that time. Vic, a school administrator, blended his profession and his passion for helping troubled youth to help develop the Rushmore Academy, an alternative classroom for youth committed to the DOC. The Rushmore Academy is a cooperative effort between the DOC, Rapid City Schools and Western Dakota Technical Institute and Black Hills Specials Services Co-Op that provides a full range of educational services that have led to several youth graduating from high school, GED and other vocational opportunities. Erlacher has helped link youth to educational and employment activities that were not before available.

Pastor Al Peratt has volunteered at the South Dakota State Penitentiary since 1999 with weekly Bible studies and assisting with Prison Fellowship weekends four times a year at the prison. Pastor Al also ministers at Ridgecrest Church, works with Christian Motorcycle Associate and the Keystone Treatment Center in Canton.

Since 2001, Pastor Bobbie Smith from the House of Prayer in Sioux Falls, has been teaching weekly Bible studies at both the Penitentiary and the Jameson Annex. Bobbie also volunteers and supports the B.L.A.C.K. Inc. groups (Brothers Learning Cultural Knowledge – group for African American inmates) by attending and speaking at their festivals. Bobbie was recently a speaker for the B.L.A.C.K., Inc.'s Black History Month Conference at the penitentiary.

Lindeman, Toyne and the Wechsler's were honored for their work with the Alternative Against Violence Project at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield. The group conducts workshops five times a year which are designed to help offenders resolve conflicts nonviolently using conflict resolution skills.

Father Gary Lantz has provided services to the South Dakota Women's Prison (SDWP) since 1998. He spends half-days at the Prison during the week and provides Mass on Saturday. In addition, Father Gary also provides counseling for all inmates and puts on a cultural program every Wednesday for the Native Americans. Father Gary was elected by the SDWP staff as Employee of the Year in 2004.

Starks started and coordinates a program at the Lutheran Church in Pierre that makes and distributes quilts to the QUEST and ExCEL programs for girls and to the Living Center program for boys at the State Treatment and Rehabilitation (STAR) Academy near Custer. Starks also travels to the girls programs periodically with volunteers to play games, do arts and crafts with the girls, as well as teach the girls how to quilt. Starks also has organized donations for stuffed animals, cash to purchase recreation equipment, books, arts and craft material (stamping, beading, quilting, painting), etc. as well as Christmas presents and cards.

Judge Smith, Judge Gors and Chris Madsen served as subcommittee chairmen for Governor Rounds' Adult Corrections Workgroup, which examined the state's corrections system to determine why the prison population continued to grow and what could be done about it. As

subcommittee chairs, these three provided leadership and direction to a very diverse group of members while committing many days of work to this project in addition to their already very demanding schedules.

Gail Knudson has volunteered her time with the Chapel program for the QUEST and ExCEL programs for more than seven years. She chooses and prepares lesson plans as well as recruiting and scheduling volunteers. She also prepares the supplies necessary for the services, treats, bulletins, music, and graduation gifts for the students and regularly volunteers to provide the Chapel services when other volunteers aren't available.

Pastors Pokorney and Anderson take turns providing services to youth in Brady Academy every week, including non-denominational services every Saturday morning and "Yellow Ribbon Meetings" during the week. Pastor Anderson started the "Yellow Ribbon" program, in which youth at STAR Academy can request a private meeting with the pastor of their choice. Pastor Anderson has been involved with volunteering at STAR Academy for over 8 years and Pastor Pokorney has been coming to the facility for more than 5 years.

Sheriff Hespen was nominated for recognition for his work with STAR Academy. He personally brings each deputy in his department to the facility in order for them to become familiar with the campus and the staff. He and his department have provided many hours of service in emergency situations and is always there to collaborate, offer advice, listen or brainstorm on ways of improving how both our facility and the Sheriff's department can cost effectively serve the public.

Lentsch and Ponto were nominated for their exceptional work at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls and Engelhaupt was recognized for his work at the South Dakota Women's Prison in Pierre. Hanson and Myers were recognized for their work with the operations of the DOC Administration office in Pierre and at the Mike Durfee State Prison in Springfield, respectively.

Each of the award recipients received a framed certificate in appreciation of their work with the department.

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DOC staff and volunteer award winners: Front row (from left to right) Sandy Wechsler, Connie Erlacher, Ruth Lindeman, Eleanor Toyne, Gail Myers, Jackie Hanson. Middle row (from left to right): Ted Wechsler, Vic Erlacher, Pastor Dave Anderson, Sharon Starks, Father Gary Lantz, Pastor Bobbie Smith, Marv Engelhaupt.

Back row (left to right): Sheriff Phil Hesper, Pastor Al Peratt, David Lentsch, Troy Ponto, Judge Max Gors, Judge Mark Smith.