

For further information
Contact
David Owen
Communications Director
Tele: 573-522-1118
Direct FAX: 573-751-4099
P.O. Box 236
Jefferson City, Mo. 65102



For Immediate Release...

Corrections News

Aug. 16, 2013

Honoring the 'unsung heroes' of the criminal justice system

Editorial by George A. Lombardi, Missouri Department of Corrections Director

When someone is called a hero, we tend to think of firefighters who risk their lives battling an out of control fire or ordinary citizens who go above and beyond their own limitations to help those in need. Those individuals receive the credit they deserve for sacrificing their own safety for the good of others. But sometimes those who display bravery may not always be rewarded with the credit they deserve.

Within the Missouri Department of Corrections (DOC), there are many such "unsung heroes." Because of the nature of the corrections industry, the public does not always hear about the great feats and heroic deeds DOC staff perform as part of their everyday duties. Their mission is to provide a safer Missouri by ensuring secure institutions, working to lower recidivism, supervising those on probation or parole, and providing a safe environment for staff and offenders across the state.

As director of the DOC, I feel privileged and proud to hear accounts where the department's staff have stepped out of their comfort zone to help those who are in need, whether it is to protect the public, assist local law enforcement officials or save the life of an offender. In many instances, these officers perform these heroic acts without regard for their own safety, and the department does its best to recognize them.

Last year, the department handed out more than 100 Life Saver Awards. The recipients of the Life Saver Award are those who have helped to save a life by such means as performing CPR, administering the Heimlich maneuver or quickly coming to the aid of an offender or fellow staff member in a crisis situation.

One example of a recent life-saving act was when four correction officers acted quickly to perform CPR on an offender who went into diabetic shock. An emergency room doctor notified the institution where the offender was housed and said that the life-sustaining treatment performed by the officers saved the offender's life.

Our department also honors those individuals who display acts of heroism and bravery by presenting them with the Award of Valor. This is an award that is only given out a handful of times each year. Our most recent recipient earned this award by assisting local law enforcement officials in subduing an out of control parole offender who was being taken into custody. Our officer went above and beyond her duties to keep the public safe before considering her own safety.

These are only two examples of many brave acts the department witnesses from its staff who perform their duties without looking for recognition or awards. Even though we strive to honor these individuals internally, for the most part, their achievements go unnoticed by those outside of the department.

And so, I wanted to take this opportunity to thank, publically, the Missouri Department of Corrections staff who strive toward excellence and, who I believe, are the unsung heroes of the criminal justice system.

###