



## Jail Programs—Where They Are—Where They Ought to Go

**Last October I was invited to** attend the annual conference of the California Jail Programs Association (CJPA) at the Asilomar Conference Center close to Monterey, California. I was unaware that such an association existed until last August when Bob Feldman, Santa Clara County, informed me that such an organization was alive and well. Featured on the program were two speakers, Robert Green and Carrie Hill—well known to people who attend AJA annual training conferences and train at some of the regional AJA training courses offered throughout the year. I absorbed a lot of good information from the speakers and from the 40-plus CJPA members in attendance.

California, as informed people know, has the largest population of the 50 states and the size of its economy places it in the top ten countries of the world. Nineteen of its 58 counties operate mega-jail systems with over 1,000 inmates according to the American Jail Association's *Who's Who in Jail Management*, 5th edition. However, the following California county jail systems listed in *Who's Who in Jail Management*, 5th edition, have rated capacities of below 100:

Amador, Calaveras, Colusa, Inyo, Mariposa, Modoc, Mono, Plumas, Sierra. City jails below 100 are Burbank and Glendale. It appears that California has almost twice as many mega-jails as it does small jails. Unfortunately for me, I have never visited any of the California small jails and have no direct knowledge of what kinds of jail programs are offered, how many of these programs are operated by volunteers, and how these small jails are staffed and what kinds of training and how much training is mandated for jail officers who work in them.

Jail staff at the Asilomar Conference Center last October represented program areas such as alcohol/drug treatment, physical exercise, mental health, medical, vocational training, education, libraries, chaplaincy, counseling, etc.

Participants indicated they found value in the formal presentations and the informational exchanges with their colleagues in other jails, something that came as no surprise. People over the years who have attended AJA annual training conferences have expressed similar views, and I have also heard these sentiments echoed in the state jail association annual conferences I have attended.

A few individuals indicated, too, that there was also needed better communication and rapport among program staff and line officers and supervisors responsible for the daily supervision of the inmates.

Coincidentally, this point was raised and discussed by one of the speakers who indicated that in his jail both line and program staff participated in each other's training programs. It's a good idea if people who work in the jail have a better understanding of programs and the necessity for good security. More jails need to try this approach. If programs are to go beyond the original purpose of keeping inmates occupied and out of trouble, then both line and program staff need to have communication harmony. Programs play an integral part in the jail, but equally so in the community when it's time for the inmates to go home.

AJA members for the most part understand the above, but it's often elected officials and the community at large who do not understand. To the extent that "jail education" needs to be done in specific communities it is the responsibility of the jail leadership to initiate this action. Both program people and line staff need to be a part of this "education" team. It ought to be a high priority now if we are truly serious about making a difference in the lives of those and their families where the jail is a home away from home.

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