

CURE-SORT NEWS

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Major changes coming next year

There will be a major addition to this publication when the next issue in 2015 is published. CURE-SORT is taking on a much larger involvement in civil commitment issues and there will be at least two pages in following issues of this newsletter which will be devoted to that topic.

Also a change in editing of this paper will occur next year when Matt Mercer of Tacoma, WA, assumes the editor position. "We look forward to this change and welcome Matt, a long-time CURE-SORT associate and supporter, to this position," present editor and CURE-SORT director Wayne Bowers said. "His lengthy experience in work with our population gives him plenty of empathy for all involved." The change was approved at the annual meeting in August and will allow Bowers to devote time to all the other aspects of our work.

Following civil commitment is nothing new to CURE-SORT. We have had communication with several persons detained in such facilities through the year and have also be in contact with some support people and families, including a support group in Wisconsin. Through the years we have had stories about the practice of holding people beyond their prison sentence.

For several years discussion among CURE personnel and CURE-SORT has focused on the civil commitment issue and the potential of forming a separate issue chapter. Through CURE, and editing by present SORT board member Thomas Chleboski, a Civil Commitment Newsletter was developed and has been published for three years. In the annual meeting, SORT board members approved assuming the civil commitment newsletter within its own CURE-SORT News as a way to maintain information continuing about this unique part of sex offender containment.

In Chleboski's words, this is the containment strategy in a nutshell:

"The government has declared war on people convicted of sex offenses to replace the failed war on drugs. In addition to draconian sentences, they are waging a two-pronged war in the form of the registry and in the form of civil commitment. The purpose of both is to contain and keep under their thumb these

'dangerous' people whom politicians have declared so without any objective evidence.

"Since by statute they can only keep most people convicted of sex crimes contained in a prison for a set amount of time, they keep them further contained by creating obstacles and barriers to success on probation or parole so that they will fail and be reincarcerated, much like greasing a staircase and yelling "fire" and then when people slip and fall down the stairs saying "see I told you he was a klutz"! By setting folks up for failure on community supervision the authorities are able to re-incarcerate those who had a split sentence or who had mandatory parole release.

"The other method of containment is civil commitment in which a government psychologist, sometimes without even examining the person, will testify under oath that the person has a psychological abnormality (which usually does not exist in the DSM) which makes them at high risk for future dangerousness. They get a court to civilly commit the person into a facility which is labeled a "secure treatment center" but which is a prison that is oftentimes more draconian than the prisons run by the corrections departments in the particular state. They are committed until they are measurably 'better' and then spend the rest of their lives watching the ball get constantly kicked down the yard to an ever new definition of treatment goals that must be achieved for the person to get 'better'.

"Of course what is really happening is that the states have hijacked psychology as both a tool and an excuse to keep people incarcerated beyond their sentence. Likewise, the Adam Walsh Act registry is designed to keep people on lifetime probation when the statutes do not permit it. This two-pronged war is thereby designed to keep people convicted of sex offenses contained either within the community or within a prison with a pretty sign that claims to be a treatment facility."

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Letters From Across the Nation

The following are excerpts from letters we receive. We appreciate your interest, concern, and feedback. We can't include every comment. The opinions printed below are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of CURE-SORT. These are examples of what we receive.

John in Florida

Thank you for the continued newsletters and information. I share them with people here.

IDEA: Have you considered running an article (maybe with readers' inputs) on:

What do you say when asked about why were you in prison in the following scenarios:

- 1) At a job interview
- 2) At church
- 3) By others

EDITOR'S NOTE: These are the kinds of questions we receive at times. These are thoughts shared by all who have been convicted of a sex offense. So, following John's lead on this, please send in your thoughts on this topic and we'll publish them next time.

From the Editor's Desk

By Wayne Bowers

May I call your attention to the box below this column. We run this notice every issue. It may be something that is ignored since it constantly appears. The request is essential to help all people to keep receiving our publication and to help us keep membership up to date. So please notice the date after your name on the envelope for your expiration date and do get in touch with ANY change of address.

Our congratulations to Board member Thomas Chleboski on his efforts in editing the Civil Commitment newsletter of CURE for the past three years. Another story in this issue tells of a major change in editing and distribution of this document. We follow all kinds of topics related to sexual offenses and those with sex offender charges. Since our early days of operation over 20 years ago we have watched the growth of civil commitment facilities, which now is located in 20 states and the District of Columbia.

Follow-up on reentry strategy for those with a sex offense is encouraging. One of the most regular topics in correspondence we receive is about a need for housing and jobs upon release. Reentry efforts on a national level have been coordinated since George W. Bush was president. Recent updated news in this issue shows the Council of State Government's National Resource Reentry Center is going to follow up with action.

The recent Ebola scare in the U.S. is raising a similar hysterical outcry to what we in our work face. Associate in Ohio Jim Prager made a good point in saying, "Listening to MSNBC and the BBC I heard similar points on how exaggerated the Ebola scare is. A school principal who visited Africa (but not the countries with Ebola) has had children kept from school. For all the hysteria there have been 3 cases of Ebola in this country. In a sense this is the same type of fear that sex offenders and the registry promote and I wonder if this is a time to make the case for fear being more of a problem than the Ebola and sex offenders we are so fearful about."

PLEASE NOTE: Check the date on your mailing label to determine if your membership is due to expire. Also, please let us know if your address changes – especially inmates – because your mail will not be forwarded. Be sure to include your prison I.D. number to guarantee proper mailing.

Jean Auldridge

Jean Auldridge, founder of Virginia CURE and director of that organization for over 26 years, passed away Oct. 12 in Alexandria, VA, after a long illness.

"Since CURE became a national organization almost 30 years ago, there have been many leaders. One of the hardest working and most respected has been Jean Auldridge. She was elected to the executive committee numerous times but she also was founder of VA CURE, a very effective chapter," said Charlie Sullivan, International CURE president.

"She established Virginia CURE as a respected advocate for prisoners and their families in the state. She will be a great loss for her family, Virginia CURE, and the many friends and acquaintances she acquired after a long life of advocacy for others," said present VA CURE director Carla Peterson of Auldridge.

"Jean Auldridge was one of the first persons I got to know well when I joined CURE in 1989 after moving to Baltimore," said CURE-SORT director Wayne Bowers. "We connected as she dealt with being a parent of a son incarcerated with the issues we work on. It was my pleasure to visit Jean's home on numerous times, having numerous conversations, and being invited to stay there when traveling in that area. I was happy to help orchestrate a visit to a group therapy session by her and Sullivan to Dr. Fred Berlin's National Institute in Baltimore. I know she had a keen empathy for our work. She and her late husband Dave are two of my special memories in these 25 years of advocacy."

"Jean, like all of us, has had some interesting experiences advocating for prison reform," Sullivan said. "One of my favorites is late one afternoon she was leaving the Capitol after visiting many offices. She was tired from walking the halls and angry about the apathy of the legislators. She said goodbye to a prison official who was there for a hearing. She was ready to drive the two hour trip back to her home when at the end of the hall the prison official yelled back to her, 'Just remember this Jean.' Jean yelled back, 'Well, what should I remember?' He yelled back, 'Just remember Jean that **YOU ARE RIGHT!!!**'"

Resources

We are pleased to offer the following resources. We ask for a donation to cover postage and printing. U.S. Postage Stamps are acceptable.

"One Breath At A Time" by Ila Davis (\$17.50)

"Understanding Offending Behavior" by Stephen Price. (A collection of 9 of Stephen's articles from previous newsletters.) (\$4.00 for the set of 9 articles)

"When Someone on the Registry Moves Into my Neighborhood" (Member Price \$5; Non-Member Price \$10)

Donations should be mailed to CURE-SORT, P.O. Box 1022, Norman, OK 73070-1022.

Support Group Forming

The family and friends of those held in civil commitment facilities often feel isolated and alienated. Many people do not understand the problems with civil commitment or the struggles faced when they aren't allowed to come home after they complete their sentences. CURE-SORT announces a new support group for the family and friends of those held in civil commitment. Andrew Extein, MSW, will lead monthly conference calls to build community around the problem.

If you are interested in joining these calls, please email us at CCN@curenational.org

CURE-SORT News

CURE-SORT News is a publication of CURE-SORT. SORT stands for Sex Offenders Restored through Treatment. CURE-SORT is one of eight issue chapters of a national criminal justice reform organization known as Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), located in Washington, D.C. CURE's address is P.O. Box 2310, Washington, DC 20013. For more information on CURE-SORT, send letters to:

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To become a CURE-SORT member or make a donation, fill in, detach, and mail this form to:

CURE-SORT
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Make checks payable to CURE-SORT
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Practices to Address Reentry Challenges

An encouraging sign of serious efforts to promote reentry resources for those with a sex offense at the end of their sentences surfaced in April. Over 1,000 participants participated in the first of a series of webinar sponsored by the Council of State Governments' Justice Center.

Considerable changes were promoted in the presentation (See CURE-SORT News Summer 2014 edition), highlighted by emphasis given to make change from a surveillance approach to a success oriented approach.

With this initiative begun, Lahiz Tavarez, Program Associate, Reentry of the Council of State Governments' Justice Center in New York, gave the following release in late October to those who had earlier participated:

"As part of a targeted initiative, the Council of State Governments (CSG) National Reentry Resource Center (NRRC) is leading a number of projects centered on changing the conversation around the reentry of individuals convicted of sex offenses. The goal of NRRC's work is to determine how evidence-based programs can improve the outcomes of these individuals, as well as identify strategies to better integrate this population into the broader reentry approach. In a collaborative effort with Center for Sex Offender Management (CSOM), NRRC conducted an assessment of the field's experience with the reentry of individuals with sex offense convictions in April 2014. Our survey findings highlighted the significant challenges reentry professionals and practitioners face related to housing and employment.

"To assist the professionals and practitioners with addressing housing- and employment-related challenges, NRRC would like to learn more about promising ideas or strategies that your organization/jurisdiction may be aware of, in the process of developing, or fully implemented. Your experiences and insights will assist your colleagues in the field who are grappling with these complex issues, and may be helpful to guide information-sharing, training, and technical assistance offered through the NRRC.

"Please follow the link below to complete this brief survey. (*Editor's Note – for those with Internet access*)

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/JCHousing_Employment

"We greatly appreciate you taking the time to complete the '*Promising Practices to Address Housing and Employment Challenges for Individuals with Sex Offense Convictions.*' Please feel free to share any questions, comments, or concerns you may have about this topic area and/or the NRRC." Tavarez' address is 100 Wall St., 11th Floor, New York, NY 10005. ltavarez@csg.org
www.csgjusticecenter.org

Major changes

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Matt is an ordained minister at the Living Springs Church of God in Christ. He earned a Bachelor's Degree in Communications from the University of Puget Sound in 1980 and an M.A. in Psychology from Antioch University in Seattle in 1996.

Over the years Matt has worked as an intake worker for a behavioral health organization, a career counselor, a childcare worker, and a life coach. Currently he works mainly with those returning to society after incarceration for sexual offenses, assisting with re-entry. Matt has a good working relationship with the Washington State Department of Corrections and churches in the area helping returning citizens with housing and employment.

Matt has also served as a Co-facilitator for the AIDS Housing Association, as a Co-facilitator for the Pierce County AIDS Foundation and as a Volunteer for the San Diego AIDS Project.