

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS
LEMON CREEK
CORRECTIONAL CENTER



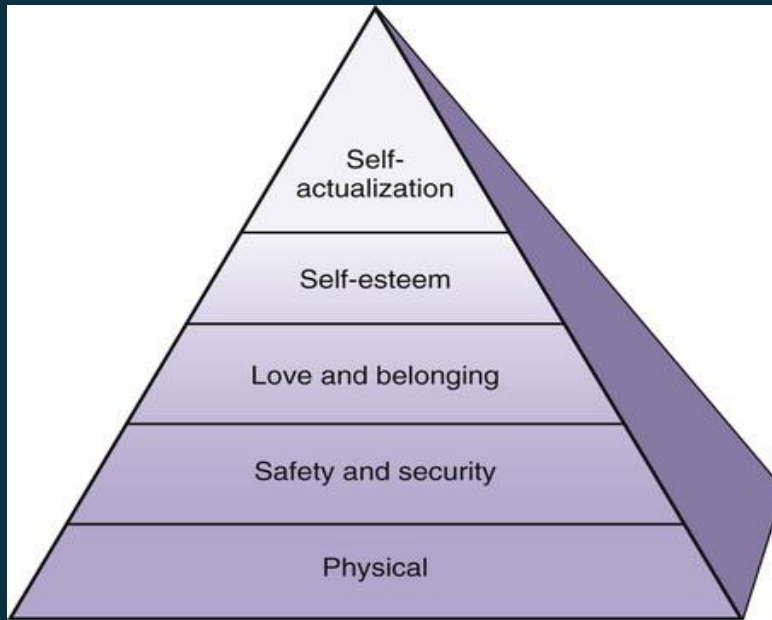
LEMON CREEK JOURNAL

INSIGHTS & IMAGES OF LIFE ON THE LAST FRONTIER,
LEMON CREEK CORRECTIONAL CENTER
JUNEAU, ALASKA



JANUARY 1, 2025

VOLUME XXIV



How Many Needs Can A Workplace Satisfy?

Volume XXIV: Organizational Culture

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To our readers:

The Lemon Creek Journal is a quarterly e-Publication of Lemon Creek Correctional Center, Juneau, Alaska. The Journal's mission is to inform, engage, and challenge Corrections professionals and the public to think critically about the challenges facing Alaska's correctional system. So that we can be more responsive to our readers, please share with us your impressions and suggestions by emailing the editor a daryl.webster@alaska.gov

Organizational Culture

Forward to Volume XXIV

In this issue of the Lemon Creek Journal we explore Organizational Culture, what it is, how it is built, and how it is best maintained. To do so, we have brought together an outstanding group of contributors from the fields of Corrections and Law Enforcement, a veteran of the War on Terror, a standout NCAA athlete, and a mental health professional practicing in the Correctional system. Even our menu contributors have broad and unusual professional backgrounds to complement their cooking chops.

- *Why We Choose To Stay* examines the welcoming and supportive workplace culture at Lemon Creek Correctional Center, and the power of that culture to influence employee recruitment & retention.
- *Sweet Victory: A Story of Team Culture* tells the heartfelt, true story of an improbable basketball team's rise from also-ran to state championship contender and the evolution of team culture that made it all possible.
- *From Burnout & Back* draws from the career experience of a U.S. Army military police officer who deployed to Kabul, Afghanistan. The author discusses how to thrive under pressure, deal with burnout, and build resilience, applying those lessons to Corrections.
- *Building a Healthy Workplace Culture at LCCC* gives a mental health clinician's perspective of nine qualities of healthy workplace culture.
- *It's All About Us, Organizational Culture & Cohesion* takes a deep dive into the profound influences that draw criminal justice professionals together in high pressure and hazardous environments.
- *Perspectives on Cooking* represents a new, recurring feature that will challenge your commitment to healthy eating and introduce you to some obscenely good food.

We consider this to be our most ambitious and in-depth issue to date. Please enjoy and remember, we thrive on feedback!



Why We Choose to Stay

By

Superintendent Bob Cordle

A quick search of the reliable all-knowing Google reveals that a great organizational culture is built on shared values, practices, beliefs, and attitudes that create an environment where employees and the workplace can thrive.

It was never my intention to make a career out of working for the Alaska Department of Corrections. I had other plans and only considered working at Lemon Creek as a temporary stop in my life's journey. I did not intend to stay more than five years. After completing a week of orientation, I was assigned to a shift and introduced to Sergeant Pat Beegle, who became my first supervisor here at the facility. I will never forget his first words to me, "Welcome to the best kept secret in Juneau!" During that first conversation with him, he ran through the list of incentives from the state's defined benefit plan, shared his thoughts on the advantages of having a week on week off work schedule, encouraged

me to work overtime to help out the team, and advised me to apply a portion of those extra earnings from working overtime toward deferred compensation. At the conclusion of his welcome speech, he smiled and said, "Oh yeah, and the people here are pretty great to work with as well."

I had only been on the job for a month when Superintendent Dan Carothers came to my post and said, "Give me your keys and go on break." I responded, "Thank you sir, but I already took my break." Looking puzzled, he tilted his head to the right and kindly stated, "I didn't ask you if you had a break, I asked for your keys and told you to go on break." I was a little more than embarrassed as I quickly fumbled to remove my keys while simultaneously responding with the expected, "Yes Sir!" I reported to a very busy booking office and wasn't sure if I should jump in to help or go to the breakroom. Sergeant Beegle looked up from typing a report and seeming

confused asked, "Bob, what are you doing here? Why aren't you on your post?" I informed him Superintendent Carothers came to my post and told me to go on break, and that when I tried to tell him I had already taken my break he didn't seem to care and dismissed me. Sergeant Beegle looked back toward the paperwork on his desk and said, "He does that from time to time." Unsure as to what to do, I asked, "What do you want me to do sir?" Continuing to work on his report he replied, "Do what you are told and go on another break." I then asked, "For how long?" He looked up at me again and from the look on his face I could see I shouldn't have asked that question. His answer was to the point, "Until you are ready to go back to your post!" That response was not helpful! I thought to myself, what if I go back too early, or even worse yet, what if I go back to relieve the superintendent too late? One thing I knew for certain, I was not about to ask my sergeant any more questions. I went to the breakroom and waited for about ten minutes of what is still to this day the most stressful work break I've ever taken. When I returned to my post, Mr. Carothers was speaking with three or four inmates in front of Echo dorm. Upon seeing me he told the inmates to go back into their living unit. He secured the slider and while returning the keys asked, "How do you like working here?" Not wanting to say or ask the wrong thing again, I promptly told him, "Best job I've ever had!"

Within weeks, friendships with my coworkers began to develop, and I was greatly impressed with the, "I've got your back" mentality that was shared among everyone I labored alongside. It was amazing to me that most of my coworkers chose to share some of their time off together and that they did this often. Fellow officers, maintenance workers, nurses, mental health clinicians, kitchen stewards, and admin staff eventually became family. We helped one another with home repair projects, babysat each other's kids, took vacations out of town together, and often hiked, hunted, fished, and camped together, no matter what the weather. We watched out

for one another, on and off duty. We celebrated newborns, attended each other's kids' sporting events, religious ordinances, and band concerts. We laughed hysterically at things we knew most others wouldn't understand or find funny, and cried and mourned together as those we loved departed this life earlier than we could have anticipated. As with all families, things weren't perfect. We sometimes had disagreements, or became angry or disappointed with one another, but those moments never lasted long, because our shared organizational culture was bigger than any of us. Trust, respect, support, and care for one another provided a sense of belonging where everyone felt welcomed and that they had a seat at the table.

Early in my young adult life, I had an opportunity to spend time with a great man whom I respected tremendously. While we visited, he encouraged me to surround myself with good people, in everything I did. He attributed all his life's successes to this. Years later, as I contemplated making Corrections my career choice, his words echoed in my mind, and I knew this was where I belonged, and this would be the reason why I stayed. I never imagined I would find myself working in a prison and that I would be happy doing so. I chose to stay because I was honored to work with a group of professionals who took pride in providing public safety, took care of one another, and strived to positively influence those incarcerated persons whose lives were currently not in the best of places. These many years later, all that has changed are the faces walking the hallways, working the posts, tending to the sick, feeding the population, maintaining our aging facility, providing interventions for those in need, greeting our visitors, and stocking and maintaining supplies to ensure smooth operations. The culture of this facility is still the same! There is always room for improvement and growth, but the unity and feeling of family here is stronger than ever! I say this with conviction because with nearly three decades under my belt I have

experienced both the good and the bad, but honestly it has most often been good!

Here are just a few comments shared with me over the years that support Lemon Creek's great organizational culture.

- *My first day on the job, I was so welcomed that it felt like I had worked here for years and had just returned from vacation.*
- *I couldn't imagine working anywhere else! With most everyone getting along so well it makes coming to work easy.*
- *Good to be back to work, I love my shift!*
- *Sergeant Pierce would give you the shirt off his back and go without!*
- *My supervisor has trust in me and that means everything!*
- *When I grow up, I want to be just like Michael Schramm! 😊*

The culture at Lemon Creek has changed little since I walked through the outer man-gate for the first time over 29 years ago. I am grateful to all of you, for your dedication to this department and to each other. Unity is our greatest strength. When we understand that as a team we must work toward a common goal and help one another succeed, the big picture is clear and our great organizational culture becomes more solid. I am inspired

daily to try harder, to do better, and to give more because of all of you.

Serving one other is essential to a great organizational culture. There are countless opportunities to render service to one another both on and off duty. In articles past, I have shared that it does my heart good to know that you look after each other, not just at work but beyond the fences as well. Though your selfless acts may be the norm for how you live your lives, they are often life changing and even lifesaving for those you so freely give your time to. As I stated at the beginning of this message, it is commonly understood that a great organizational culture is built on shared values, practices, beliefs, and attitudes that create an environment where employees and the workplace can thrive. But without the human component, the common understanding of what defines a great organizational culture is merely empty words. What makes the organizational culture at Lemon Creek so great? It's you of course!

There are so many collective reasons why we choose to stay that I couldn't possibly list them all. But I firmly believe that almost everyone would point to the people we work with, the team standing next to and all around us, the team who has each other's backs, who are friends as close as family! I hold you all in the highest regard. I have learned much from so many of you. You are the voice of our institution! Great organizational culture is built by the hands of many. We build it together! Thank you for the contributions that make us Lemon Creek!

Sweet Victory: A Story of Team Culture

by

Kacy Lockhart

The ball was weathered and slick, the grip worn off from many hours of pounding on the Southeast Alaska, rain-soaked, outdoor basketball court. The rims were slanted, far below regulation height, and the nets were often torn or missing altogether. Recess “duties” tried in vain to get the elementary boys to return to class long after the bell rang, only for one more shot to be hurled up. Every true competitor knows you can’t leave on a miss. Many skinned knees, bragging rights, and high fives were earned and distributed on those courts over the years.

As the boys aged and their physiques filled out, their knowledge of the game evolved and improved, and so did anticipation for their high school careers to begin. They had several talented athletes, but over their first three years of high school, they struggled to put the pieces together and had average, albeit disappointing seasons with losing records and unmet expectations. They had been knocked out of the Region tournament every year, never having won a single region game in those first three years. The game plan, often isolation ball, wasn’t working. Loss after loss, frustration mounted. Players argued, bad shots were forced, and their exasperated body language revealed the game was no longer fun.

Following a particularly disappointing junior year, multiple players talked about transferring to other programs. The star player no longer wanted to play and told the team he was done. He no longer wanted to carry the weight. Egos got involved and teammates cursed each other in practice. It would’ve been reasonable for the coaches to throw their hands up and to throw in the towel.

But the dream wouldn’t die easily. A few core dedicated leaders remained, and their passion for the game drove them to raise the bar. They chose to homeschool to spend more time in the gym. They dissected hours of game film, read books on leadership, turned down the high school party scene, called regular off-season team meetings, set goals, challenged the younger kids to step up, and initiated hard conversations with struggling teammates who wanted to walk away.

Coaches also knew it was more than the playbook that wasn’t working. More than a few isolated individual efforts and attitudes needed to change. The program, the team, the organization needed a cultural change, a new mindset, a new identity.

To start the senior season, new captains were chosen, not based on who had been there the longest or who had the best stats, but on who exemplified the values, beliefs, passion, and leadership required to right the ship. The game plan shifted to teaching players to embrace new roles to fill in the gaps, moving the ball for the best shot, and digging in on team defense to create better opportunities on offense.

Players bought in. They were willing to sacrifice personal accolades to fill whatever role the team desperately needed, in order for the team to be successful. They learned to celebrate each other's successes. Bench players were valued and pushed the starters at every practice. Success didn't come automatically, and it didn't come without setbacks. On more than one occasion, a dominant, well-rounded first half was followed by a blown second half lead as the team reverted to old ways.

But, throughout the course of the 5-month season, the team made consistent progress. Others could see it and feel it. Knowledgeable, invested fans in the stands often commented, "this is how the game is supposed to be played." At the end of their final season, the Region V basketball tournament loomed. They had been 0-6 in Region play the last three years. But they had belief, an unbreakable spirit, and a new culture on their side. And a run for the ages ensued.



The guys won their first region game against their crosstown rival. They had finally tasted their first real joy of victory, and they weren't content to settle. They continued to advance through the Region tournament, coming from behind an improbable, 15-point deficit late in the fourth quarter of their next game to send them to the Region Championship. Solid team play led them to conquer the Region V crown and cut down their first nets. Made especially sweet, the Region tournament win punched their ticket to the much-coveted state championship tournament, something they had dreamed about since those early childhood days.



They came into the State Tournament as underdogs. The sixth seed. No one expected them to be there. Staying true to their new culture, in their first State tournament game, they came from behind. Down 9 points in the fourth quarter, they rallied to upset the #3 team in overtime. In the next game, the semi-final against the #2 team in the state, they found themselves down one point with only seconds left. One of the team captains intentionally fouled out of the game to stop the clock and force the opponent to shoot free throws. This would be their only chance at winning. A time out was called. Their star player who just a few months ago had wanted to quit, who wanted to escape the heavy burden of previous losses, looked the benched captain in the eye and told

him, "I'm not going to let you lose this game." With 2 seconds left, now down two, their only hope was a Hail Mary, a full court baseball throw. It was thrown perfectly, a foul ensued on the catch, and two clutch free throws were made to force overtime. They would prevail again. They had advanced to the State Championship game. Together.

They would go on to put up a valiant team fight against an undefeated #1 team, ultimately falling short of a championship victory. But this team, this program, these kids, had accomplished something far sweeter than a medal. They had been tested, put through the fire for four years and experienced so much failure. But through grit, selflessness, and a little March Madness, they also experienced the joy of doing things the right way. Their shared values, beliefs, and actions had permeated the team. They had learned to sacrifice for one another. They cared about each other as people, not just as teammates. Ultimately, their victory was the satisfaction of being the catalysts to change their own culture.



It didn't happen overnight. It didn't happen by chance. It took leaders leading. It took perseverance, little steps, and stalwart dedication to the common goal. It took support from the top and commitment from all levels. It took a willingness to set aside differences- to work through those differences- to see others' perspectives, to listen, to create a safe environment to build trust through vulnerability. It took hard conversations, intentionality and unwavering perseverance.

Just as a team has an identity and a culture, so does every organization. Organizational culture can be defined as how individuals act when the boss isn't looking, how the boss reacts to people who break rules, and what is affirmed and recognized. It's not what staff are told to do, but what actually happens. It's about thousands of unconscious habits, norms, and underlying assumptions that influence decision-making, communication, and overall work environment. It's not driven by external policies and SOPs, but by intrinsic benefit.

When individuals are healthy, culture is at its best. The team is only as great as its weakest link. By prioritizing individual wellness, the entire workplace and subsequently, the organization, reaps the benefits of a healthy work environment. It's easy to say that responsibility lies at the top. Yes, it should start with good leadership and one can argue that change is most effective at the supervisory level. However, we must each take individual responsibility and initiative for our own wellness.

When organizational culture is healthy, all dimensions of wellness are strengthened. Occupational wellness and job satisfaction occur when employees embrace their role on the team and are genuinely valued and appreciated. Emotional wellness is nurtured when stress reactions are normalized and seeking help is viewed as a sign of strength and growth. Social wellness blooms with the support and mentoring of new employees. Intellectual wellness flourishes when innovation and creative ideas are encouraged and implemented.

This positive organizational wellness can be seen in real day-to-day examples within DOC. A correctional officer chooses to conduct one last security check before his shift ends, as a courtesy for the new shift coming on, and a suicide attempt is thwarted. When a retiree passes away from a

lengthy illness, an employee steps in to care for his dog. Academy staff accept a Murph challenge from a group of ambitious recruits. Weekly potlucks provide a chance to connect and build morale. Co-workers come together to fundraise for a terminally ill spouse of one of their own. A friend follows up on a concerning text from a peer who hasn't been showing up to work. Sensing tension and high levels of stress, a new supervisor requests additional support for his cohort. Thirty-five couples sign up for a Stronger Families Couples Retreat.

Time and time again, our DOC staff pursue holistic wellness and act in ways that uphold shared values and belief systems. When the identity of the organization is one of vigilance, pride, and dedication, the team thrives.

For this to happen, we must take a hard look at areas within the organization that are struggling. Where is the playbook not working? We must be willing to have hard conversations and to be honest with what needs to change. We must see the benefit of breaking free from the way we've always done things. We must value each player all the way down the bench. Leaders must be willing to step in and sacrificially serve – take an intentional foul (loss of the limelight) to keep the team in the game. We must commit to healthy coping habits and forego those that cause detriment to ourselves and to our team. We must prioritize our physical fitness and health so we can do our jobs to the best of our ability. We must have the courage to walk alongside a struggling teammate, with the mentality, "I'm not going to let you lose this game."

We all have a choice to join the team or to sit on the sidelines. We have the privilege to create our own destiny. It will not happen overnight. It will require sacrifice. But there's sweet victory to be had that goes beyond cutting down the nets.



Kacy Lockhart was born and raised in Jackson, Michigan and graduated from Albion College with degrees in Psychology and Sociology while playing collegiate basketball and softball. She was named NCAA Woman of the Year Award Winner for the state of Michigan in the year 2000. Kacy describes herself: "Searching for exciting jobs 'Out West,' I landed a job interview over the phone with Juneau Youth Services and moved to Juneau, Alaska sight unseen in 2000. One of the perks of the job was kayaking around Admiralty Island (200 miles for 21 days) with 10 juvenile offenders. This taught me a lot about the underdeveloped adolescent brain and patience, and I'd do it all over again if I could. Before working in Corrections, I held jobs in Community Care Licensing, Juvenile Rehabilitation/Residential Case Management, and the Juneau School District – but my most important job was staying home with our 4 children for 10 years. I enjoy good food, taking long pensive walks in nature, coaching youth sports, traveling, basking in sunshine, connecting with people, and being part of a team." Since coming to Alaska Department of Corrections, Kacy has served in the Wellness Unit, as Criminal Justice Planner.

Thunder Mountain High School "Final Falcons" 2023-2024 Photos courtesy of Marc Guevarra

From Burnout & Back

By

Ashley Lally

My Journey: Lessons From the Military

May 2025 will mark 20 years since I began my journey as a military police officer in the United States Army. At 18, when I arrived at Norwich University, I took my education, training, and the job itself very seriously. I treated the task of being responsible for human lives with, I believe, the respect that it warrants. I knew that caring for myself—physically, mentally, and emotionally—was essential to creating a culture of excellence that leads to optimal performance. This set a strong foundation for success in the military, but life always has more in store for us.

In late 2011, I was asked to present on the sympathetic nervous system during a Leadership Professional Development session. That assignment had a profound impact on me. I learned how our stress response is automatic and beneficial but can become detrimental if overstimulated. Crucially, I discovered that we can train ourselves to regulate this response through mind-body training.

These lessons served me well during my deployment to Kabul, Afghanistan, from January 2012 to January 2013. The environment was extremely stressful—15-hour days, seven days a week, the mission had high-stakes political ramifications, and we were constantly dealing with the unpredictability of operating in a war zone. I witnessed firsthand how unmanaged stress affected decision-making and team dynamics. Yet, despite being one of the youngest and least experienced officers, I thrived in that chaotic environment.

Keys to Thriving Under Pressure

Reflecting on that time, several factors contributed to my success:

- **Building Trust:** My work partner, Alain, and I developed a strong professional relationship that allowed us to collaborate effectively under pressure. We always worked through any conflicts by starting with the fact that we were both trying to accomplish the same mission. We also made time to take coffee walks and talk about non-work-related topics.
- **Support Networks:** My friend, Michelle, provided invaluable support, from making me hooch-cooked meals to encouraging me to partake in self-care activities. Although I was not always in the mood to accept this support, Michelle knew when I needed to take better care of myself and pushed me to do so.
- **Healthy Habits:** Daily exercise, a structured routine, and healthy meals helped me maintain physical and emotional balance. This is objectively easier to do in a deployment environment and takes a healthy dose of self-discipline each day to be successful.
- **Humor:** Watching a comedy episode every night before bed became my decompression ritual. Laughter is one of the fastest and most effective ways to lower stress.
- **Stress Management:** I didn't avoid stress but actively worked to master it. I embraced heightened states when necessary, such as during high-risk tasks like escorting detainees or

driving the streets, but also ensured I utilized strategies to come back down in a healthy manner afterward.

Recognizing Burnout

While I excelled in the structured, temporary stress of deployment, I underestimated the toll of prolonged high-stress environments later in my career. As Senior Director of Security & Emergency Management for the Anchorage School District, daily acute stressors—from staff assaults to student violence—combined with longer stressors such as earthquakes, pandemics, and major life transitions, eventually led me to experience burnout.

In 2022, ten years since my deployment, my body forced me to confront what my mind had been trying to ignore. Even though I was intimately familiar with the concepts of stress management, it still caught up to me because instead of recognizing my heightened stress and taking steps earlier to mitigate it, I ignored the signs and let the pressure build until circumstances overwhelmed me. Symptoms like nausea, irritability, and lack of motivation were wake-up calls. A well-timed vacation helped me recognize the severity of my burnout. From there, I took steps to re-regulate myself: I engaged in therapy, meditation, journaling, and reflecting on my values. I rebuilt my daily habits to ensure I could stay mindful and present. I reconnected more intentionally with the personal relationships in my life. I also gave myself grace, reminding myself that service work is inherently hard, and that resilience requires intentional effort. Take it from me, it is much harder to crawl yourself out of a deep stage of stress, rather than have the tools to remain above it. The key, then, is to have the ability to recognize when you need support and to get it before you continue to slide down into deeper stages of stress.

The Challenges of Corrections Work

The stressors are even more unique and profound for those working in corrections. You face daily acute stressors—suicides, threats of violence, constant hypervigilance, trauma exposure, and irregular shifts. Over time, even small incidents accumulate, sticking with us and creating what is known as *correctional fatigue*. **A 2013 study found that 25% of corrections officers sampled had depression, 27% had PTSD, and 17% had both. The national averages were 7%, 4%, and 5%, respectively.**ⁱ

In Alaska, additional challenges like long, dark winters exacerbate these pressures. Without intentional strategies for safeguarding mental and physical health, stress compounds until it overwhelms. It's essential to acknowledge that corrections work is unlike any other. Recognizing this truth isn't a weakness- it's the first step toward building strategies to protect ourselves and each other. The fact that you have chosen to sign up for a difficult career should empower, not discourage you. It is admirable and courageous. We can no longer ignore the plain fact that what we experience at work is outside the norm and that we need a variety of tools to keep the stress at bay. Each of us should aim to retire out feeling stronger and healthier than when we came in, grateful for the experiences and growth.

So, with so much adversity, we ask: *How do we keep showing up? How do we build mental fortitude and maintain our resilience over time?*

Building Resilience in Corrections

When we choose inherently stressful professions, we must also decide to mitigate that stress and foster resilience—both individually and organizationally.

Personal Strategies for Resilience:

1. **Daily Habits:** Prioritize exercise, balanced nutrition, and sufficient sleep. These foundational habits regulate your body's stress response and provide a built-in backstop for us to utilize when we do encounter stress.
2. **Mind-Body Practices:** Techniques like deep breathing, mindfulness, and visualization can help mitigate and process stress and prevent it from building up.
3. **Support Networks:** Lean on colleagues, friends, or family. The strength of your relationships can provide a crucial buffer against stress. Try to engage with those who work outside of corrections; an unbiased and outside perspective can help to see your stress from a different view.
4. **Professional Help:** Therapists or coaches can provide invaluable tools for emotional regulation and personal growth. The EAP is a great place to start.
5. **Know Yourself:** Reflect on when you have experienced stressful periods in your life. What worked for you in the past? Taking a long drive after work to decompress before getting home? Video games? Cooking dinner while listening to music and dancing? It may take some time to know which tools work for you and which don't, so it's important to be intentional.

Organizational Strategies for Resilience:

1. **Culture of Trust:** Leadership must foster a supportive environment where employees feel safe seeking help when impacted or overwhelmed. We must understand that not everybody has the same level of resiliency; some have experienced much hardship and have found ways to manage it that work for them, while others have not had to utilize these mind muscles as much, and will need some time, experience, and support in getting there.
2. **Stress Training:** I offer workshops on emotional regulation and stress management tailored to corrections work. We do a deep dive into psychological reactions to stress and share psychological and physical tools to combat it.
3. **Peer Support Programs:** We have a team of well-trained and eager peers ready to support you through any of life's burdens.
4. **Prevent Burnout:** We offer reminders following critical incidents to take extra care of yourself, sharing self-regulating tools and resources.

Redefining Resilience

Resilience isn't about "bouncing back" without processing what happened. True resilience means learning and growing from adversity, strengthening our capacity for future challenges. It was a lot of work to process my burnout, but I am a stronger person today because of it. Life is full of difficulties; corrections work magnifies them. The question isn't whether we'll face adversity, but when it will happen and how we'll respond to it.

The Power of Organizational Culture

While leadership sets the tone, every individual contributes to workplace culture. I believe that a sustainable culture starts and ends with the foundation of an organization, and the foundation of any organization is its people. It's the "how" each employee shows up for work.

Now look around and ask yourself: *Is this the kind of work culture I want to be part of?* If not, consider how **you** can help create the culture you crave. Each of us decides how we show up for work; one individual can impact the whole, and true strength is achieved when we all come together to build the culture that we desire.

So, naturally, the next question becomes: *What type of culture do we desire?* I hope your answer, like mine, is a resilient one.

What is one thing you will commit to doing, today and into the future, that will contribute to building this culture of resilience? It can be for yourself, for others, or both.

Building a Resilient Future

We know that a life without stress is impossible, and we know that we have signed up for a job that exposes us to even more stress. We must acknowledge these truths so we can move forward, supporting one another to be the best versions of ourselves. The most high-performing individuals I've ever worked with are those who have mastery over their thoughts, words, and actions. This is only possible when we are in control of our stress, not when our stress is in control of us.

As I reflect on my 20-year journey, I'm reminded that resilience must be embedded into the fabric of our organization; it takes each of us to practice monitoring our stress and then taking action to re-regulate as needed. A culture of resilience transforms stress into a strength, enabling individuals and teams to thrive. *Resilience isn't avoiding difficulty but using it to grow stronger.* Together, we can create a department where resilience isn't just an individual trait but a collective strength that benefits us all.



Ashley serves as the program coordinator for DOC's Critical Incident Stress Management and Peer Support program. Born and raised in New Jersey, she has called Alaska home for over 10 years. Her favorite decompression activities include skiing, reading, and cooking. She is pictured here with her niece, Kinley, in one of her favorite spots: Arctic Valley.

¹ *Depression, PTSD, and Comorbidity in United States Corrections Professionals: Prevalence and Impact on Health and Function*, Michael D. Denhoff, PH.D., Caterina G. Spinaris, Ph.D., Published in Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, 2013.

LEMON CREEK CORRECTIONAL CENTER
EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER
PO Sarah Jones



PO Jones began her career at Lemon Creek Correctional Center as a Correctional Officer in August 2013. During her career at Lemon Creek, she has served as a booking officer, an FTO, a Shift Sergeant, the Standards Sergeant and now is one of our Institutional Probation/Parole Officers. PO Jones always steps up to meet the mission head on, no matter what the task is. She has been a tremendous asset to the hiring team and has assisted in filling our CO vacancies to 100%. Lemon Creek Correctional Center is honored to name her Employee of the Quarter.

LEMON CREEK CORRECTIONAL CENTER
2024 FRED DUGDALE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

SSgt. Jeremy Green



Lemon Creek Correctional Center names SSgt. Jeremy Green the 2024 LCCC Employee of the Year. SSGT Jeremy Green began his career with Lemon Creek Correctional Center in October of 2012 with a slight break in service from 2017 to 2019. He always presents himself as a professional, a team player and a leader. SSGT Green has been a booking officer, a Max officer, a PTO, an FTO, an Acting Shift Supervisor, a Records Sergeant and is now the Standards Sergeant. He gives freely of his time and energy without hesitation and is the first to step up and assist, without being asked. SSGT Green has taken on primary responsibility for recruitment and hiring and has built an incredible team that brought Lemon Creek's CO vacancy rate from catastrophic levels to full employment. He has been the primary construction consultant for on-going construction of the Lemon Creek firing range control tower. His exemplary work ethic inspires all who work with him. Lemon Creek Correctional Center is honored to name him Employee of the Year.

Maintaining a Healthy Workplace Culture at LCCC

By Andrew Shand, MHC

The average American spends 1/3 of their life at work. Given that amount of time, it behooves us to take an active role in fostering a workplace environment that allows for good quality of life. I am grateful to find myself at LCCC because it is a healthy workplace culture. With that said, like maintaining our physical health, maintaining the organization health of a workplace requires ongoing attention and effort. Without a consistent proactive effort, health in all forms can unnecessarily dissipate over time. In terms of maintaining a healthy organizational culture, common thought on the topic suggests that effort should be giving to promoting the following characteristics. For the purposes of this writing, I will be using the guidelines as set out by Insperity, a Human Resources service. <https://www.insperity.com/blog/organizational-culture/>.

NINE QUALITIES OF HEALTHY WORKPLACE CULTURE

1. Sense of Belonging

For people to perform at their best, they must feel that they are a part of a team. Employees who have a sense of belonging to a team will work toward a common goal and will be comfortable bringing up constructive concerns about whatever jeopardizes the achievement of that goal. A team with a sense of belonging will organically and appropriately support an otherwise effective team member who may be experiencing a period of personal stress or difficulty.

2. Focus on Wellbeing

A workplace is ultimately made of people. The main driver of a healthy workplace culture is emotionally healthy and professional employees. An employer has an interest in investing in the wellbeing of its workforce. Recently, Department of Corrections (DOC) formalized a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team/ Peer Support Team. DOC has several peer support specialists in various locations throughout the State who can offer emotional support during times of personal or professional hardship, and can, if necessary direct people toward resources. Additionally, through the Cordico App, DOC employees can access vetted clinicians, wellness toolkits, sleep aids, and self-assessment tools. Check out the DOC Wellness Page for more information in this area.

3. Connectedness

In a healthy organization, no employee operates in a silo. Everyone's effort goes toward common, widely accepted goals. A healthy organization puts time and resources into

fostering and maintaining team building. In a healthy organization, leaders have a never-ending task of identifying and fostering the next generation of capable leaders. Ideally, this happens at all levels. This can take the form of a formal or informal mentorship design.

4. Transparency

One of the main drivers of a toxic work environment is the presence of a culture of gossip and exclusion. By comparison, in transparent work environments, professional expectations are commonly understood, leaders are transparent about their expectations, and employees throughout the hierarchy feel free to report concerns in an appropriate, effective manner. This prevents grievances from festering and eroding a healthy workplace environment. Transparent communication and expectations promote fair and equitable treatment of employees.

5. Mutual Respect

A commitment to treating each other with respect is a strong foundation on which to build any relationship, including work relationships. Putting the concept of respect into action can include listening to the thoughts of all members of the team, including only necessary parties in conversations centered on corrective action, as well as being respectful of each other's time.

6. Trust

In a healthy workplace culture, it's important that employees feel free to share ideas and explore new ways of effectively completing tasks. A healthy workplace culture allows this to happen without fear of non-constructive criticism. A trusting foundation among co-workers allows for significant information to flow up the chain of command so leadership can make decisions with a complete knowledge base. A foundation of trust allows people in management positions to extend more autonomy to those they manage. This, in turn generates opportunities for more experience and the cultivation of the next generation of leaders.

7. Dedication to Growth and Development

A healthy organization constantly develops and searches for more effective ways of achieving goals. Consistent attention to improving standards of practice is encouraged in a healthy working environment, with important contributions coming from employees in all roles. Best practices, in all fields, including corrections is constantly expanding.

Employees in healthy work environments are enthusiastic about and encouraged to expand their skill sets. When this attitude is embraced by a significant portion of an organization, the culture promotes each employee to be their best version of themselves, and to reach their full potential.

8. Openness to Change and Evolution

No successful organization stays the same. We exist within an environment in which conditions are constantly in flux. This includes the personalities that come into our facility, the expectations of the community we serve, the type of behavior we are expected to manage, the various struggles the inmates that come to us present with, among other ever-changing factors. A healthy workplace environment can adapt to a changing environment, without sacrificing its core values or mission.

9. Consistency

In an ever-changing world, there needs to be some level of consistency employees can count on. Consistent and equitable expectations are an essential stabilizing force in a healthy workplace environment. If an employee engages in behavior that does not meet professional expectation, reprimand should not come as a surprise. In addition to leadership modeling professional expectations, ideally, this is done among peers as well.

Now that we have spent some time discussing the characteristics of a healthy workplace, it makes sense to discuss some of the hallmarks of negative, or toxic work environments, as well. Some common traits of toxic work environments include the presence of hardened clique's which are not welcoming to new employees or new ideas, excessive gossiping, passive aggressive behavior, bullying/ harassment behavior, lack of opportunities for growth, an abundance of non-constructive criticism, lack of peer respect, lack of accountability for poor behavior, purposeful negativity used to undermine peers, patterns of behavior that serve an individual's interest at the cost of the organization's interest and a general atmosphere of social negativity.

It is our responsibility to maintain and continue to grow a healthy workplace environment here at LCCC. We are lucky that LCCC is currently a professionally healthy workplace. It is much a more manageable task to maintain a healthy workplace, than to repair a workplace that has become unhealthy. With that said, maintenance of a healthy environment does require effort. Consistent exposure to trauma, will naturally drive people towards unhealthy behavior. When working in a DOC setting, a proactive approach to a healthy workplace environment is crucial. As grass needs to be mowed with regularity, unhealthy behavior in the workplace, needs to be consistently addressed. We all have a role in both modeling ideal workplace conduct, and making people accountable for not meeting the expectations of the type of environment we want

to work in. Given the significant portion of our time we spend here at LCCC, let's all take responsibility for building and maintaining a workplace culture we can continue to look forward to inhabiting.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT US

Organizational Culture & Cohesion

By

Superintendent Daryl Webster

On one of the saddest days of my life, I took part in a funeral motorcade, slowly making its way down Tulsa's Highway 169. The procession, escorting a lone hearse and guided by twin columns of police motorcycles, stretched more than a mile, scores of marked and unmarked police cars with code lights flashing, from the Tulsa metro area, other Oklahoma towns and cities, and surrounding states. Along both sides of the highway, motorists pulled to the shoulders and stood in solemn lines, hands or hats over their hearts, some saluting, all visibly stunned by the rare spectacle and the sheer weight and mass of the ritual sorrow flowing past them. All because a few nights before, a "Green Shirt," as Tulsa officers were then known, was fatally wounded and left to die alone in the darkness of a seldom traveled street when a traffic stop went bad. Now his brothers and sisters assured that he would not make his final journey alone.

At the cemetery, bagpipes played as officers took their places in formations around the grave site, most of us too far away to hear what the chaplain had to say. But when the final words were uttered and the honor guard fired their salute, a bugler blew Taps from a hilltop, the saddest notes known to man, and we all heard that clearly enough. My eyes burned hot with tears, which I discretely brushed away, as if there weren't hundreds of others doing exactly the same thing. They're burning again as I commit this memory to paper. Then, like all funerals, it suddenly ended and there was nothing more to say or do but to go on with the business of living.

Most of us returned to work that day and we all soon leaned into the rhythm of duty. Cop humor quickly reasserted itself, not because there was all that much to laugh about, but because we knew that skill and experience would see us through most difficulties, but levity might be the only way to live with what we must see and do. And of course, we returned to grumbling, as if nothing had happened. On calls, we complained about citizens not appreciating us and other officers not carrying their weight. At union meetings, we grouched about Management,

administrative pencil-pushers, and news reporters. I wouldn't learn until later, when I had more brass on my collars, that Management complained just as frequently about us, (reserving ample scorn for pencil-pushers and reporters too, of course).

We squandered way too much time and emotional energy wrestling over pay, benefits, out-of-touch leaders, out-of-sync followers, and petty grievances. But like squabbling siblings, just let someone outside the family dare to interject and the fight was on. We always came together when it counted and we each bled true blue, which made it all the more sad that it took the occasional death of one of our own to remind us of what should have been evident all along, that we were members of one professional family, cut from the same cloth regardless of rank, and steeped to our souls in common values and traditions. I suppose negativity and isolationism were elements of our professional culture too, just as surely as green shirts, bagpipes, and the occasional heartbreaking funerals that bound us to generations of Tulsa police officers, past and future.

Which leads to the question of what makes first-responder culture so enduring in the face of such pressure, much of it self-inflicted, and how much of those unifying influences can or should be encouraged to take root at DOC?

UNIFYING INFLUENCE #1: BELIEF IN A HIGHER CALLING

Recruiters in all fields encounter too many people applying for or accepting positions, who consider their employment to be just a job, a temporary stop on the way to an ill-defined future. This explains much about why employers in every economic sector now struggle to retain staff. Younger employees will accept employment for the money and maybe the cachet, but they are unlikely to stay unless offered the opportunity to be part of something bigger, something that allows them to affiliate with people they like and admire, doing things they judge to be important, not out of any cost/benefit calculus, but because they are making a difference, and they feel it.

When I first hired on as a deputy sheriff in Arizona and later as a Tulsa Police Officer, I was just a young guy in need of a paycheck. The fact that a law enforcement job promised to be exciting, dangerous, unpredictable, and powerfully ego-boosting was icing on the cake. Had I carried those primary motivations 5 to 7 years into my career, I probably would have quit and tried something else, as many officers do at that landmark stage of their careers, because the money wasn't that good, and even excitement gets boring after a while. Having earned a law degree on the side, it would have been easy for me to hang up the uniform and gun belt and start collecting real money. But as I considered what to do, I was surprised to discover that somewhere along the line I'd caught the "True Believer" virus. I still craved the adrenaline rush, but I came to enjoy accepting leadership responsibilities and broadening my skillset. And threading its way through those varying motivations, was a quiet faith that I was doing something good, and right, and bigger than myself, even if I couldn't always put my finger on how it was happening. So, I

stayed, and worked out that quandary for myself, though I shouldn't have had to do so alone. Our law enforcement leaders left us to make up our own minds, but as DOC leaders, we should find it natural and imperative to challenge our personnel to embrace a higher calling, because we're on that path ourselves. We should help new officers and support staff to understand that a broader world exists within the walls of our institutions.

UNIFYING INFLUENCE #2: SHARED RISK & SACRIFICE

The cost of living with risk and routine sacrifice manifests in high blood pressure, heart disease, hyper-vigilance, social isolation, failed marriages, and elevated suicide rates

Law enforcement officers may be killed or injured on any given shift, by countless means. Confronting armed suspects, conducting high-risk search warrants, intervening in family and neighborhood disputes, and the unknown hazards of every traffic stop, all kill cops week in and

week out. Among correctional officers, the risk of death is somewhat less, but the threat of violence is ever-present and officers must walk their posts with potential aggressors on all sides. So, it might confuse the uninitiated to discover that while police and correctional officers are aware of the risks they face, they spend very little time obsessing about it. Habitually confronting risk and overcoming it, instills courage. Even in small doses, courage changes people, building risk awareness, risk tolerance, and the strength of character that officers come to recognize and respect in themselves and their teammates.

The same is true of the element of sacrifice in criminal justice professions, particularly among police and correctional officers. Officers invest years of their careers working night shifts and sleeping the daylight hours away, like vampires behind blackout curtains; spending holidays walking posts or shagging calls; missing their kids' school and sports events; while all around them, normal people live normal lives, blissfully unaware of those in uniform walking point in the shadows outside.

While officers are probably more susceptible to pessimism than to fear, based on the not-so-fair assumption that the public doesn't care about the risks they face and the sacrifices they make, both risk and sacrifice leave permanent scars if you know where to look. The true cost of living with risk and daily sacrifice manifests in workplace disabilities, high blood pressure, heart disease, hyper-vigilance, social isolation, failed marriages, and elevated suicide rates. Officers know and feel the cost but more to the point, they are aware that only their fellow officers can truly understand, and this draws them closer to one another while distancing them from everyone else. Small wonder that most officers have great difficulty expanding their social circles (or negotiating their spouses' social circles) to include people who are not criminal justice professionals, like themselves.

UNIFYING INFLUENCE #3: SHARED SYMBOLS & RITUALS

Criminal Justice symbols and rituals have existed for millennia within military and paramilitary organizations, as tangible reminders that those who wear and participate in them are special and exclusive. No doubt, in some primitive societies, they were associated with supernatural powers and purposes. And you know what? Those primitive people were onto something.

The mere act of dressing for duty before each shift is a daily reminder of how vastly different officers are and of the necessary but seemingly irreconcilable challenge of simultaneously serving as warrior spirits and public servants.

The uniform, utility belt, weapons, the star or shield worn over the left breast; the heart-wrenching spectacle of officers’

funerals, the bagpipes, and the mournful sound of Taps are as engrained in our professional identity as the image of the Archangel Michael, patron saint of officers, armored for battle, wielding a sword, a vanquished dragon beneath his boot. The mere act of dressing for duty before each shift is a daily reminder of how fundamentally different officers are and of the seemingly irreconcilable challenge of simultaneously serving as authority figures and public servants. The symbols and rituals of our professional calling are potent, imbuing us with renewed energy and purpose, precisely at those times when our faith may be flagging. As leaders, we need to embrace the symbolic and ritualize it with sincerity.

UNIFYING INFLUENCE #4: EXTERNAL PRESSURE & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Students of group dynamics have long known that external pressure encourages groups to become more cohesive as a means of defending the group and enabling it to survive in a threatening environment. There is no shortage of pressure on criminal justice organizations, applied by hostile media, political influences, defense and plaintiffs’ attorneys, and outspoken members of the public, to name a few. In heavily unionized agencies with poor Labor-Management relations, even departmental leaders may be identified as threats and out-grouped, as being “external” to the rank and file.

External pressure encourages groups to become more cohesive.

To address this, police officers are taught the tenets of Community Policing from Day One, and chief among those tenets is the principle that public support is vital to agency success. Public outreach and partnership are daily endeavors, as police agencies seek to expand their cohesive core and become more cohesive with the public they serve. Public/police relationships built in this manner help manage the tensions that periodically arise between them. And when something unfortunate occurs and the news goes public, it is at least possible for public, legal and political stakeholders to give the agency the benefit of a doubt. That narrow advantage,

earned by countless hours of earnest public interaction, can make all the difference in the world for an agency under fire.

Corrections Departments around the U.S. stoically endure their share of external heat with only minimal determined investment in public outreach. Consequently, over time, the public hears very little about the virtues and accomplishments of Correctional Departments but an abundance of criticism for alleged shortcomings. When bad news breaks, there is no accumulated goodwill to counterbalance it. Officers sense this and chafe at rarely receiving public recognition unless the portrayal is negative. In Alaska, under Commissioner Winkelman’s leadership, participation in Red Cross and similar charitable initiatives like Shop With a Cop, and community improvement projects may be moving the needle of public perception, but there is more that can be done. It is worth DOC’s while to encourage institutional staff to become more active and visible within their host communities. They should stand as equals among local law enforcement agencies and serve officially in civic organizations, such as Rotary International, while taking advantage of every opportunity to positively portray officers and staff in media interactions. Investment in positive public image offers substantial benefits at very little cost.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Organizational Culture is a collection of written and unwritten rules, shared perceptions, common values, unique symbols, institutional history, and interpersonal relationships that binds us together and distinguish us from other groups of people.

This unique culture transforms us into “Us,” and our commonalities help make us cohesive. How we conduct and project ourselves in the context of that distinction, is what renders our Organizational Culture healthy and productive, rather than dysfunctional and destructive.

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Cultures of negativity often spring up through neglect, particularly in the criminal justice professions. Neglect, in its gravest form manifests when criminal justice leaders presume that their subordinates’ loyalty and strong internal motivation will cause them to overlook mistreatment or lack of care and continue performing at the same high level. That presumption will only stretch so far, particularly when leaders permit gross pay inequities to exist, or when budget-balancing results in pay cuts or lay-offs. Internal motivation dies quickly in the face of existential threats to the financial well-being of employees’ families. Neglect or fail to connect with a workforce long or pointedly enough and its members begin to identify as co-victims and eventually as co-combatants. Resistance becomes their higher calling; a sense of mistreatment and victimhood their shared sacrifice; badges and patches of office, symbols of respect denied them; and Management becomes Them, the alien occupying force they must resist.

Departmental leaders do well to recognize the latent, unifying power of professional culture, and cultivate it for its usefulness, rather than permitting it to spring up and evolve unattended, like an

Officers from all but the most dysfunctional agencies tend to feel a strong sense of identification with and ownership of their departments.

invasive weed. This is where all the attributes of assertive leadership come to bear; hiring the best without reducing standards, training them well, leading them conscientiously, never abusing their faith and trust, and always maintaining focus on the mission and the importance of the work being done.

Organizational cultures that embrace a higher calling, virtuous sacrifice, cherished symbols and rituals, and that recognize each officer as the inheritor of a noble history are virtually indestructible. This is why officers, particularly in older, established departments, tend to feel a strong sense of identification with and ownership of their departments. Such intense bonding and sense of history between workers and their professional organizations seldom occurs anywhere outside the realm of the military and first responders.

Here at Alaska DOC, there is very little in the way of a unifying departmental culture. Alaska is vast, its correctional institutions as widely dispersed and isolated as outposts in a wilderness empire, hosted by communities with unique traditions and cultures. Consequently, in a department of nearly 2,000 employees, give or take, we never lay eyes on more than a fraction of DOC personnel at different institutions and field offices, who perform the same functions, carry the same titles, or wear the same uniforms. There is much to be done to create a proud and resilient organizational culture within the greater Alaska DOC, but practically speaking, much of that work must be done at the institutional level. It is well worth the effort.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & COHESION AT LEMON CREEK CORRECTIONAL CENTER

Organizational Cohesion encourages groups to endure and perform well under pressure. What characteristics bind us together at Lemon Creek, and what kind of “Us” has that bond created? Lemon Creek employees overwhelmingly report that their teams and their co-workers are key motivators that contribute to their satisfaction at work. Particularly on floor shifts, teams spend 12 hours a day, 7 days a week working together. During their 7 days off, most work at least a day of overtime and when not working, team members spend a good deal of time recreating together. This also reflects the influence of Alaskan culture, which draws people together to cope with isolation and to share their love of the outdoors.

When Lemon Creek employees refer to their co-workers as their “Professional Family,” the phraseology is significant. People recognize family as the most durable and reliable of human relationships. Family members care about one another, sacrifice for one another, and step up in time of need. This degree of workplace bonding is rare and priceless. Consider the following comments, offered anonymously by Lemon Creek employees in a recent survey:

- *This job has been a blessing from God. It's family and has been that way my entire career.*
- *Coming to work is like going home. The comradery and respect to one another at LCCC is second to none.*
- *I enjoy coming to work at LCCC because I am excited to work with my shift every time and we always have one mission.*
- *I enjoy working with my co-workers and most of all I enjoy coming to work because of the culture.*
- *Most everyone is like family and would do anything to support each other.*

But the family factor goes even deeper at Lemon Creek. In February 2023, high traditional turnover and the effects of COVID left the institution with a nearly catastrophic 26 percent vacancy rate among correctional officers. Additional chronic vacancies existed among support staff. At the time, it was easy to imagine that Juneau's limited labor pool had been tapped out and that we must look outside of Juneau or even outside of Alaska for job candidates. But Superintendent Bob Cordle begged to differ. He believed that there were untapped human resources in Juneau and if traditional recruitment wasn't reaching them, it was time to make it personal. He began pitching careers at Lemon Creek to acquaintances and to complete strangers; workmen, store clerks, no one was exempt. Stories have it that so persistent was he in his recruiting that door-to-door solicitors reportedly stopped coming to his home and spammers from foreign phone banks blacklisted his number. He challenged others at Lemon Creek to follow his example, and vacancies began to decline. The CO vacancy rate now rests at zero. For the 12 month period from February 2023 to February 2024, annual attrition, which previously ran approximately 20-30 percent per year, fell to just 11 percent.

As a fascinating side effect of grassroots recruitment by employees, the face of Lemon Creek began to change. Today, for the first time in memory, 36 percent of Lemon Creek employees are related to one or more co-workers by either birth or marriage and a great many of them come from families who immigrated fairly recently, tracing their ancestry back to the Philippines or South Pacific Islands. At Lemon Creek, we appear to be witnessing the emergence of a new cultural/professional heritage, with the sons and daughters of the Pacific becoming a dominant force in an important public safety profession, right here in Juneau.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE & PROFESSIONALISM AT LEMON CREEK CORRECTIONAL CENTER

Each Alaska DOC institution is distinctive, and each has a functioning organizational culture. At Lemon Creek Correctional Center, we have inherited long-evolved attributes that are worth

cultivating, perpetuating, and modeling. Having come to Lemon Creek from a distant law enforcement agency that was hopelessly mired in Management/Labor strife, I marveled at the attention to mission and at the remarkably positive state of labor relations at LCCC. I attribute this to a high-quality workforce, to Superintendent Cordle being a remarkable leader, and to the ethical commitment both he and I have made to respect our personnel and to treat them accordingly.

In a recent survey, 73 percent of responding Lemon Creek employees reported that they consider their employment to be a “Career,” rather than a “Job.”

A majority of employees responding to the Lemon Creek survey described themselves as being highly motivated by good leadership and assessed Lemon Creek as being strongly influenced by professional ethics and led by competent leaders. 73 percent of respondents reported that they considered their employment to be a “career,” rather than a job. We preach this theme at Lemon Creek, while continuing to reduce attrition and stabilize our workforce, because we strongly believe that employees who see themselves as career professionals are more likely to be internally-motivated and more likely to stay with their employer longer than employees who see their work as merely an interchangeable job. But a word of caution: Simply referring to employees as “professionals” is a poor substitute for treating them as such. If our experience with employee motivation and institutional performance has taught us anything, it is that we must constantly demonstrate and communicate how valuable our personnel are and actively engage them in the process of recruiting, training, and leading our institution. Professionals should not be kept in the dark or their talents left to wither. As leaders, we need to explain our motivations and expectations, encourage feedback, accept disagreement without feeling threatened, and challenge our professional workforce to outperform our considerable expectations.

While researching this article, I was encouraged by those who had so many good things to say about our institution and their co-workers. Lemon Creek’s professional culture is indeed alive and well, sustained by a tightknit workforce of faithful professionals whose efforts make a difference. Therein resides perhaps the most significantly overlooked contribution of our officers and staff. They serve and protect the public in near anonymity, but they encourage and uplift one another in very visible ways, and it is they, more than anyone or anything else, who transform a difficult job into a noble and productive career.

Georgia Style Chicken & Dumplings

By

SSgt. Mitch Cook



I love cooking and sharing good food, and there is nothing I'd rather share with people who mean a lot to me than good, Southern country cooking, recipes straight from my home and family. Call it *Comfort Food*, because the preparation, flavors, and scents always take me back to the place where I grew up, down South on the Bells River, along the Florida-Georgia line. Here is one of my favorites, Georgia Style Chicken & Dumplings.

Georgia Style Chicken & Dumplings

Serves 4 to 6

Ready in 1 hour 50 minutes

- One 2 ½ -3 lb. chicken
- 3 – 4 celery stalks, chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 Bay leaves
- 4 quarts of water
- 10 ¾ oz. can cream of celery soup
- 2 chicken bouillon cubes
- Season to taste with salt & pepper

Disarticulate the chicken, but do not remove the skin. The skin and bones can be removed later and meat can be hand-shredded after cooking. Place chicken, celery, onion, bay leaves, bouillon, and seasonings in water and boil at a rolling boil for 30 to 45 minutes, until meat begins to fall off the bones. Remove the skin and bones and the bay leaves at this time. Return the chicken to the pot. Prepare the dumplings and set them aside for a few minutes (See below for dumpling preparation). Add cream of celery soup to the chicken and continue to boil. If you want, you can thicken the stock a little by mixing 2 tablespoons of cornstarch with ¼ cup of water and add it to your stock.

Dumplings

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- ¾ cup ice water
- 1 teaspoon salt

Mix the flour and salt together in a mixing bowl. Starting in the center of the flour, dribble small amounts of ice water. Work mixture with fingers from the center of the bowl to the sides of the bowl, periodically incorporating small amounts of water. Continue until all the flour is mixed into batter. The batter will feel tough at this point, but don't be concerned. Knead the dough and form into a ball. Dust a good amount of flour onto a clean surface and a rolling pin. Roll out the dough, working from the center. The dough will be firm. Roll to about 1/8-inch thinness. Let the dough air-dry for a minute. Cut dumplings into 1-inch wide strips. Working with one strip at a time, hold the strip over the pot, pull it in half, and drop it into the boiling stock. Remember DO NOT STIR the mixture after dumplings have been added to the stock pot. Shake the pot gently in a circular motion to submerge dumplings in stock. Cook for a few minutes more, until dumplings are done.

Dumplings normally cook quickly at a boil, which is why they are added to the dish near the end of the process. DO NOT OVERCOOK. A perfect dumpling should be soft and slightly doughy, not dry and crumbly. How will you know if your dumplings are done? To check, insert a

toothpick through a dumpling. When you remove the toothpick, look for it to be clean. If dumpling dough sticks to the toothpick, the dumplings are not yet done. As a rule of thumb, expect them to be done in 5 minutes.

I truly hope you enjoy this as much as I do.

Historical Note: (Excerpt from *The True History of Southern Chicken and Dumplings Isn't What We Thought*, Southern Kitchen, July 22, 2021)

Dumplings, or dumpling-like foods, have been around, and served with stewed meat of some kind, for centuries. Related to the boiled puddings that have been a staple of European cooking since before America was colonized, these hearty, floury dishes date back to at least 1600, and they've made appearances in American cookbooks since, as far as we know, Mary Randolph's 1836 cookbook "The Virginia Housewife." Many more "housewife" cookbooks over the decades of the 19th century mention recipes for boiled dumplings of some sort, most notably Lettice Bryan's "The Kentucky Housewife," which includes a recipe for rolled suet dumplings, served in a broth with shredded meat. (As is the case with all housewife cookbooks, though, it is important to note that most of these recipes were cooked and perfected by enslaved Africans and, later, African American servants.)

The chicken part came a little later. In 1879, Marion Cabell Tyree published a cookbook called "Housekeeping in Old Virginia," which, with contributions from 250 of Virginia's "noted housewives" was almost a proto-Junior League cookbook. In "Housekeeping," you'll find two recipes for stewed chicken, one of which is simmered with "dumplings, made like biscuit but rolled thin." The stew is finished with a round of butter, rolled in flour and spices, which is used to thicken the broth.



SSgt. Mitch Cook serves as the Training Sergeant at Lemon Creek Correctional Center, where he cooks for staff on a regular basis. His Southern dishes are workplace favorites.

Egyptian Red Lentil Soup

By

Cherie Wolfe



This recipe goes back about twenty years for me, I hadn't made it in a long while but just recently whipped up a batch for my elimination diet. I get migraines more than I'd like and I don't want daily medication, so I went to a functional medicine doctor to try to find the cause. Diet was first on the list, yes diet. Turns out that I am not allergic to any food, but I have quite a few *sensitivities*. Food sensitivities mean that my body is playing “not so fun” games with certain foods.

These sensitivities can lead to a wide range symptoms, such as:

- Abdominal Pain (why not add a little internal drama to your day?)
- Digestive issues (when your gut has opinions about what you eat)
- Gas and Bloating (now we're getting into the real party territory)
- Headache or Migraines (I like to say, it hurts to get smarter - No jokes please)
- Heartburn (when baking soda is part of your everyday diet)
- Nausea (stomach rebellion)
- Brain Fog (when you're on a mental vacation whether you want it or not)
- Anxiety and Depression (Yay!)

- Upset Stomach (again, with the opinionated stomach)
- Fatigue (feels like sleepy time, all the time)
- Sinus Congestion or Nasal Drip (uncomfortable and embarrassing)
- Joint Pain (because every joint in your body wants attention)
- Eczema or other Skin Rashes (when your skin wants to play peek a boo with your self-esteem)

The elimination diet cuts out all the food sensitivities plus other favorites (like coffee, chocolate, and refined sugar, to name a few). This goes on for three weeks as I try to heal my gut, which basically is my body's way of saying, 'We need to talk'. The silver lining? There is no calorie restriction and it's all natural with 7-9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day which is tough for most people, but not for me. Seriously, there isn't a vegetable that I won't eat. I'm basically a veggie Superhero!

This recipe checks all the boxes. It's easy to make, it meets all the elimination diet requirements, and it's a flavor sensation! Not a bad trade-off for saying goodbye to coffee, chocolate, and sugar...for now.



A lot of people don't know what a red lentil is. Red lentils are a small, orange in color legume that cook rather quickly and break down into a creamy consistency. They are used in Indian and Middle Eastern cultures and have a mild, earthy, slightly sweet flavor.

Along with tasting great, they have many health benefits:

- Promote heart health
- Protect against cancer
- Lowers cholesterol and blood sugar levels
- Promotes gut health
- Rich in dietary fiber
- Low in fat
- Essential nutrients:
 - Folate
 - Iron
 - Potassium
 - Magnesium
 - Manganese

Let's cook!

Ready in 50 minutes

Servings: 3

INGREDIENTS

- 5 cups [vegetable broth](#) or 5 cups [water](#)
- 1 cup [dried red lentils](#)
- 2 cups chopped [onions](#)
- 2 cups chopped [potatoes](#)
- 8 [garlic cloves](#), peeled and left whole
- 1 tablespoon [canola oil](#)
- 2 teaspoons [ground cumin](#)
- ½ teaspoon [turmeric](#)
- 1 teaspoon [salt](#)
- ⅓ cup chopped [fresh cilantro](#)
- 3 tablespoons [fresh lemon juice](#)
- salt and pepper

DIRECTIONS

Add the first 5 ingredients to a large pot; cover and bring to a boil. Lower the heat and simmer 15-20 minutes or until the lentils and veggies are tender. Take pot from stove burner and set aside. In a small saucepan, add the oil; warm over low heat until the oil is hot but not smoking. Add in the cumin, turmeric, and salt; cook and stir constantly for 2-3 minutes or until the cumin has released its fragrance (be careful not to scorch the spices). Set spice mixture aside for 1 minute to cool. Stir spice mixture into the lentil mixture; add cilantro, stir to combine. You can puree the soup, in batches, in a blender OR you can use an immersion blender and blend to desired texture (I like to leave it a little chunky). Add in lemon juice; stir to combine. Rewarm soup in soup pot; season if needed with salt/pepper.

In my most recent batch, I substituted Garbanzo Beans (added last instead of first) in place of potatoes and it was just as delicious! Goes great with a dallop of sour cream and served with Naan, any variety of rice, couscous, or quinoa.

This recipe will help your gut and your taste buds!!!

Enjoy!



Cherie Wolfe grew up in the rolling hills of Pennsylvania, where she spent 30 years running a gourmet popcorn shop, that expanded to serve breakfast and lunch, soups, salads, and baked goods. She served for two years supervising 50-60 inmate kitchen workers at Pennsylvania’s State Correctional Institution – Fayette, before coming to Lemon Creek Correctional Center as Food Services Supervisor. Cheri believes that home cooking should be healthy and adventurous. “Sure, I’m all about salads and nutrient-packed meals,” she says, “but I believe in balance. Life’s too short not to sneak in that extra cookie or indulge in a bowl of pasta now and then. After all, a cookie in hand makes everything better, don’t you think?”

Lemon Creek Correctional Center Wants YOU!



Lemon Creek Correctional Center in Juneau, Alaska employs Correctional Officers, Food Service & Maintenance Specialists, Nurses, and Administrative & Clerical Staff. Check out [Governmentjobs.com/careers/Alaska/](https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/Alaska/) for job opportunities DOC's Juneau facility.

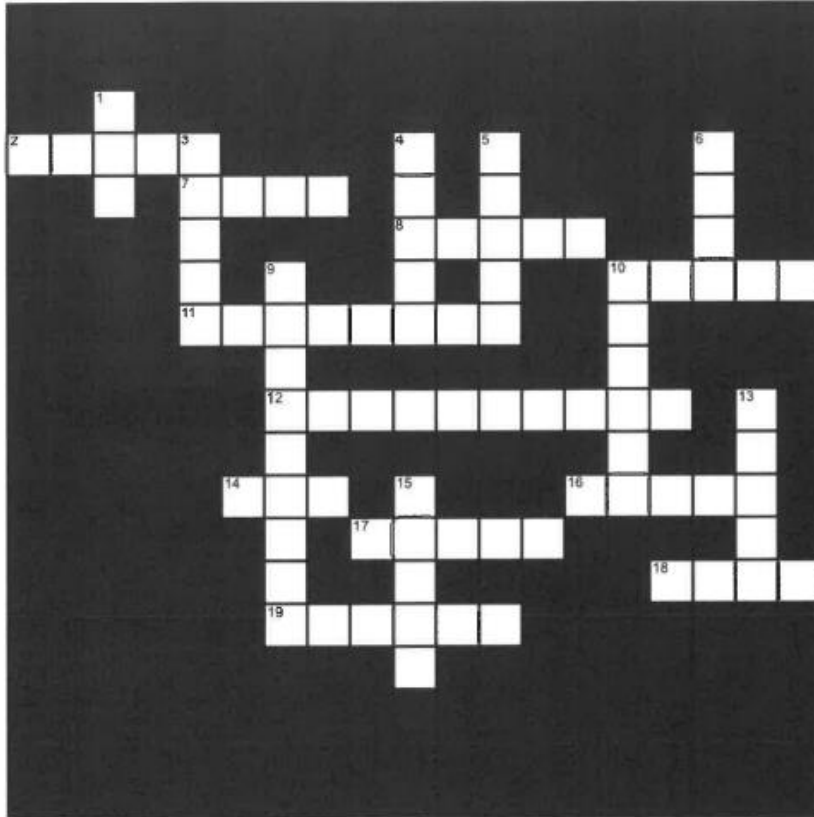
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- A supportive & team-oriented work environment

For information, contact Lt. McCracken at (907)465-6288. We look forward to working with you.



Let's Stick Together



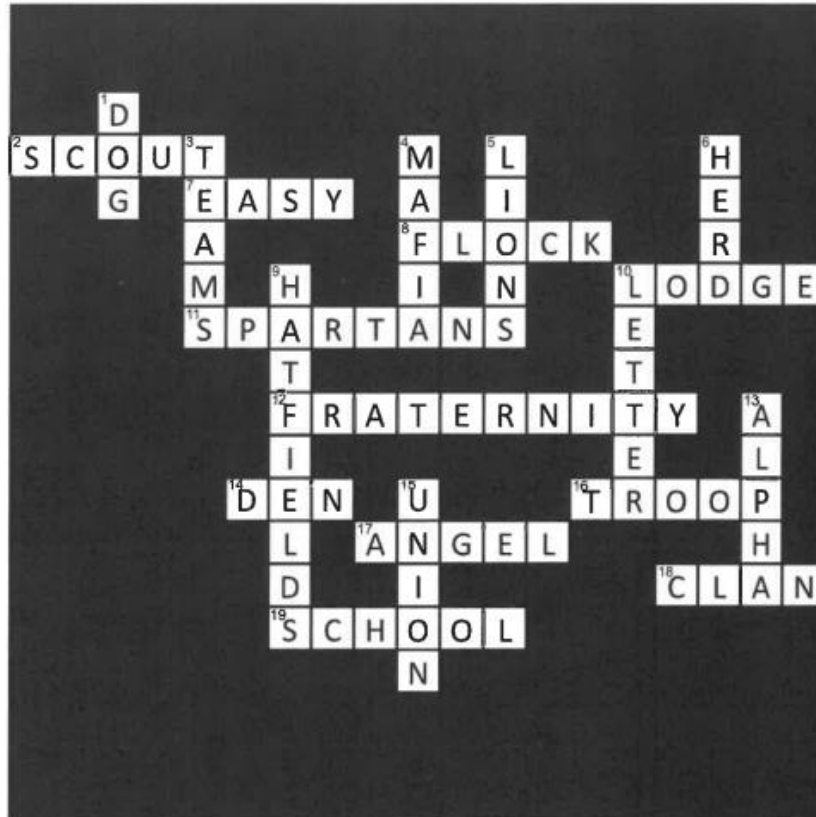
Across

- 2 Eagle medal wearer
- 7 Band of Brothers company
- 8 Birds of a feather do this together
- 10 Moose gathering place
- 11 Played defense at Thermopylae
- 12 Male equivalent of sorority
- 14 "3 bears" nap room
- 16 Collection of Scouts
- 17 Hellish motorcyclist
- 18 Tlingit matrilineal group
- 19 Scholarly group of fish

Down

- 1 Kennel Salmon
- 3 Yankees and Mariners
- 4 Members make their bones
- 5 Proudest animal family
- 6 Herefords by the dozen
- 9 They hate McCoys
- 10 Varsity jacket patch
- 13 Leader of the pack
- 15 Workers' bargaining group

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