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## **A Survey of Probation Officers Concerning The Use of Hair Testing for Illicit Substances**

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*Abstract:*

*A first of its kind survey was recently administered to probation and parole officers with the Virginia Department of Corrections concerning the use of hair testing for illegal substances by their clients. Sixty three officers responded to a survey that included thirteen quantitative measures and sixteen open-ended questions on the topic of hair testing in the field. Among the results of the survey are that officers were overwhelming in their support for the use of hair testing. They expressed confidence in the results of hair testing and the majority preferred it to testing based on urinalysis. The respondents were part of a federally-funded research project on the use of hair testing that was conducted over four years and which administered over 2,200 hair tests to probationers and parolees. We conclude that while hair testing is well liked by participating officers and is widely used as a pre-employment screening device, a comprehensive testing policy based on hair analysis is yet to be implemented in a corrections setting, and it is unlikely to be implemented in the immediate future because of cost concerns and bureaucratic status quo.*

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*“Currently, the overwhelming use of hair testing in the field of criminal justice is as a pre-employment screening tool for a number of police departments and as part of a post-employment monitoring program.”*

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The monitoring of subjects under community supervision for the use of illegal drugs is a ongoing task for the modern probation and parole officer in America. The most common means of detecting drug use in use today is based on an analysis of body fluids. Urinalysis is the preferred means of detection by most supervising authorities but new methods have been developed which include the analysis of saliva, perspiration and, in rare cases, the use of a blood sample. In the late 1970s, an innovative technology based on the analysis of a hair sample was patented and began the process of acceptance in the scientific, professional and legal communities as a valid and reliable means of detection (Ditton, 2002).

Funding for research on the use of hair analysis in a field setting was obtained in 1998 and over the course of the next four years, Virginia officers submitted 2,261 hair samples to the participating vendor. Of that number, 667 samples tested positive for cocaine, marijuana, amphetamines, opiates and/or PCP. One hundred and fifty nine samples were returned as quantity not sufficient for testing. Approximately thirty-two percent of the valid sample (2,102) tested positive for one or more of the listed drugs (see Figure 1). Cocaine was the most commonly

## Survey (Continued)

reported drug, reported in 58% of the positive samples, followed by marijuana (36%), opiates (3%), amphetamines (3%), and PCP (less than 1%). These patterns are similar to those reported in other studies (Baer et al, 1991; Knight et al, 1995; Mieczkowski et al, 1993) for similar populations.

**Figure 1. Overall Results, January 2000-March 2003**

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N = 2,261  
QNS = 159  
Valid N = 2,102  
Positives = 667 (31.7%)  
(cocaine, marijuana, opiates, amphetamines and/or PCP)  
Negatives = 1,435 (68.3%)

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As a part of our research, we mailed a survey to 130 probation and parole officers, drug court counselors and drug-rehabilitation workers during the spring of 2001. The officers included in the sample had recently completed a four hour training program on the use of hair testing and were practiced in the collection of hair samples for drug testing. The results of the survey show that the participating officers are well satisfied with the use of hair testing and many added unsolicited comments on the survey indicating such satisfaction.

This article will first describe the basic stages in the hair testing process and will include brief comments on the techniques utilized in the process. For a more detailed discussion of the controversies concerning sample collection, testing procedures and other issues surrounding hair testing see variously Mieczkowski, (2000); Smith and Goodman (1996); or, Baumgartner and Hill (1996). In this article, we wish to focus on the perceptions of officers who have used the technology in the field. We summarize the responses to thirteen questions that asked the officers to rank-order preferences and policy recommendations. We also include some summary of sixteen open-ended questions that are exploratory in nature. We conclude with some comments on where hair testing is in the process of criminal justice policy implementation and make some predictions about the future of hair testing in American corrections.

### The Hair Testing Procedure

The standard process of hair analysis includes the following steps: specimen collection, sample washing, digestion or extraction of the hair sample, immunoassay screening, and confirmation or quantitation of the various analytes (Henderson et al, 1995).

The process of testing hair for drugs in our research begins with the collection of approximately 100 strands of hair from the client by the supervising officer. The sample is labeled in the client's presence and placed in a specialized envelope for shipment to the lab for analysis. Hair samples do not require refrigeration and can be shipped at later date. They should be placed in a secure area, such as a safe or locked filing cabinet in order to maintain the chain of custody.

Laboratory processing consists of three basic stages—sample preparation, initial testing, and confirmation testing. Each stage is an important process and some techniques are patented. Testing results can be returned to the collector via surface mail; they can also be faxed, phoned or viewed over the Internet at a secure, password-coded site. In our experience, all positive results were reported within three days of receipt of the sample by the lab—negative results had a quicker turnaround time.

### The Sample Preparation Phase

The procedure of sample preparation focuses on chain of custody, contamination control, and dissolution of the

## Survey (Continued)

sample into a medium appropriate for testing. The procedure varies by vendor, but these basic steps are necessary for accurate testing. Identification of sample is the primary step to establish a legal chain of custody.

Contamination control implies two things: First that the sample is prepared in a controlled environment to prevent cross-contamination with other hair samples in the laboratory environment; Second, it implies confidence that a positive test result is the consequence of drug ingestion and not a result of external contamination of the hair sample. To control for the possibility of external contamination, our vendor utilizes "a three hour and forty-five minute wash in six chemical solutions" as stated on the vendor's website and as observed during a tour of the testing facility. The effluent from the hair wash is preserved for subsequent analysis if the sample tests positive. This process is generally referred to as wash kinetics and is generally used to assess the potential of passive exposure and thus refute the argument of external contamination (Mieczkowski, 1992).

The culminating stage in the preparation process requires the hair sample to be put into solution for analysis. The one and one-half inches of the hair nearest to the root end is put into solution in a process sometimes referred to as "being digested". The remainder of the hair sample is discarded. Digestion methods may be patented, and different solvents and processes are utilized by various vendors. Once the hair is liquified, the initial testing stage can begin.

### *The Initial Testing Phase*

The initial testing phase, sometimes referred to as the screening phase, utilizes a patented technique of immunoassay. In general, immunoassay techniques "tag" the sought-after chemical substance (referred to as the antigen) with a uniquely altered antibody. Some of the more common tags are enzymes (as in enzyme-multiplied immunoassay test), fluorescent materials (as in fluorescent polarization immunoassay) or radioactive materials as used in the hair testing procedure.

The antibody and antigen are combined in solution. The antigen-antibody compound will precipitate out of solution and the resultant "button" is assessed and the quantity of antigen inferred from the amount of antibody detected. The antigens may be parent drugs or metabolites from the drug ingestion process in the body. This technique is used to identify substances of abuse in urine, as well as hair.

The sample is retested following a positive result. The sample will also undergo wash kinetics and confirmation testing. Wash kinetics is a separate analysis of the solution used to wash the initial sample of hair and is considered to be a means of ruling out the possibility of external contamination of the hair sample. All three techniques are meant to rule out false positives.

### *The Confirmation Phase*

The confirmation phase generally utilizes the techniques of mass spectrometry and/or gas chromatography. These analysis techniques are expensive, time consuming and labor intensive. Only those samples that test positive in the initial phase are subjected to confirmation.

## Implementation of the Survey

An important part of field research is the measurement of the participants' perceptions of the process. We considered it to appropriate to take notice of the acceptance or non-acceptance by field officers of this new and innovative technology. Failure on the part of field officers to utilize hair analysis would curtail the effectiveness of the technology and would prevent valid evaluation of the technique. As a consequence, the researchers developed a questionnaire and disseminated it to over 130 Probation and Parole Officers, drug courts counselors and various other Virginia state drug-rehabilitation workers in the spring of 2001. The officers were selected for inclusion in the survey based on their successful completion of a short training program on the use of hair testing. Sixty three surveys were returned for analysis.

## Survey (Continued)

All of the officers in the sample had undergone accredited training for hair sample collection during the course of the grant period. Five surveys by trained officers who had not collected a hair sample in the field were not included in the following analysis. These officers provided positive comments regarding training and the overall concept of hair analysis. The following summary is based on 58 returned surveys. The respondents collected between ten and fifteen hair samples on average.

From the start, we implemented a comprehensive approach for addressing officer concern over the use of hair analysis. The contracting service, Psychomedics, provided a standardized training course of about four hours to all participating officers. Any questions that the officers asked during the course of that training were answered by the Psychomedics trainer at that time. The officers were given Officer Callahan's office number and email address should they have any during the course of collecting hair for analysis or when they received the results from the lab. As might be expected, numerous questions were asked during the four-hour training session, but few follow-up questions were asked of Officer Callahan once the trained officers returned to the field. We took that as an indication of the adequacy of training, the ease of the collection method and the simplicity of interpreting the results provided by the lab.

Ease of use was only one dimension that we wished to measure. Another important dimension was the officer's "satisfaction" with the technique and their confidence in its use. A final dimension of interest was the officer's opinion on how to use hair testing in the field. We asked a number of questions about policies that allowed mandatory or discretionary use of hair testing by probation and parole officers.

### Quantitative Responses on the Survey

The survey included 13 quantitative responses (on a scale from 1 to 10) and 16 qualitative or written opinion responses. The quantitative responses fell into the following topical categories.

#### *Overall Satisfaction: Questions 1 & 2*

Overall ratings of hair testing are positive, as evidenced by the responses to Question 1. The average score on a scale of 1-10 is 8.4. The range of the responses was 5-10, which indicates that no officer responded negatively, in that 5 is generally considered to be a neutral response. We believe that the respondents are well satisfied with the use of hair testing and indeed many added positive and enthusiastic comments on the survey indicating such satisfaction. A majority of respondents preferred the use of hair testing over urine testing, as evidenced by the responses to Question 2 (mean = 7.8).

#### *Policy Recommendations: Questions 5, 6, 7, & 8*

A number of questions were asked of the officers concerning policy implications and the proposed use of hair testing as a replacement for, or supplement to, urinalysis. Question 3 shows that most officers would not recommend that hair testing be used as the sole means of monitoring offenders (mean = 5.3). Rather, they are very supportive of a policy which utilizes hair testing as a supplemental means of monitoring offenders (mean = 8.7).

Question 5 (mean = 6.6) and Question 6 (mean = 7.5) addressed the timing of hair testing. The officers seemed somewhat neutral on testing all new probationers immediately following sentencing but were more positive on conducting semi-annual testing.

Finally, Questions 7 and 8 indicate that the majority of officers would be in favor of a policy which allows the supervising officer to hair test at her or his discretion. The responses indicate that the officers would not be in favor of mandatory testing but would prefer to exercise their professional discretion when determining the need for hair testing. These responses do not preclude the implementation of a policy that mandates testing at certain

## Survey (Continued)

stages in the process and which also allows officer the discretion to use supplemental tests when he or she determines them to be needed.

### *Training Satisfaction: Questions 9 & 10*

Question 9 (mean = 9.0) and Question 10 (mean = 8.6) indicate that the officers were very satisfied with their training and were confident of their ability to collect a hair sample after some practice. These results were gratifying to the researchers who endeavored to establish a comprehensive and professional training program which provided adequate opportunities for feedback, as well as questions and answers from the officers.

### *Interpretation of Test Results: Questions 11 & 12*

Question 11 (mean = 8.8) and Question 12 (mean = 8.0) indicate that the officers felt that the hair testing results were easy to understand and these results were easily comparable to the standard results that they were accustomed to receiving from urine testing labs

### *Confidence in Results: Question 13*

The final quantitative question (Question 13, mean = 9.0) is important in that it specifically assesses the officer's confidence in the use of the hair testing results in court. As the responses indicate, the officers express overwhelming confidence in hair testing and expect their courts to accept hair testing evidence.

**Figure 2. A Summary of Quantitative Questions**

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1.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most satisfied, how would you rate your overall satisfaction with hair testing? range = 5 - 10 mean = 8.4	
2.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most satisfied, how would you rate hair testing in comparison to urine analysis? range = 3 - 10 mean = 7.8	
3.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most highly recommended, would you recommend that adopt hair testing as the sole means of monitoring offenders? range = 1 - 10 mean = 5.3	DOC
4.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most highly recommended, would you recommend that adopt hair testing as a supplemental means of monitoring offenders? range = 1 - 10 mean = 8.7	DOC
5.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most highly recommended, would you recommend that test all new probationers immediately following sentencing? range = 1 - 10 mean = 6.6	DOC hair
6.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most highly recommended, would you recommend that test clients under supervision on a semi-annual basis? range = 1 - 10 mean = 7.5	DOC hair
7.	On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most highly recommended, would you recommend that adopt a policy that allows the supervising officer to hair test at his or her discretion? range = 1 - 10 mean = 8.9	DOC

Please see *Survey* on page 6

## Survey (Continued)

**Figure 2: Quantitative Questions (Continued)**

8. On a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most highly recommended semi-annual testing and 1 being most highly recommend a policy based on officer discretion, would you recommend that DOC adopt a policy which requires semi-annual testing rather than a policy based on officer discretion.  
range = 1 - 10 mean = 4.2
9. How would you rate the hair collection training on a scale of 1-10?  
range = 5 - 10 mean = 9.0
10. How would you rate your confidence in collecting a hair sample on a scale of 1-10 after collecting a couple of samples?  
range = 5 - 10 mean = 8.6
11. How would you rate the “understandability” of the hair testing results on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the most understandable?  
range = 5 - 10 mean = 8.8
12. Were the hair testing results comparable to the urine results that you are familiar with?  
range = 2 - 10 mean = 8.0
13. How confident do you feel if you were to use the results in court?  
range = 5 - 10 mean = 9.0

### Qualitative Responses in the Survey

We asked 16 qualitative questions that could be grouped into the following categories: questions about the training and practice of collecting hair samples (6 questions); use of testing results in revocation proceedings (4 questions); two questions were asked about clients who voluntarily confessed to drug use upon learning they were subject to hair testing; and, three solicitations for general comments, problems, or anecdotes were made.

#### *Collection Practices*

There were few responses concerning training and sample collection practices. Very few respondents reported problems and those that did referred to returned samples because the quantity of hair submitted was not sufficient for testing—commonly referred to as a QNS. This problem was most likely to occur during the first few samples collected, a consequence of collector inexperience. A recurrent theme was anxiety concerning the possibility of collecting hair from other sites on the body other than the head. However, no one noted that they were driven to collect such a **sample**

#### *Use of Results in Revocation Hearings*

Twenty-four of the officers (42%) reported that they had used or had pending revocation actions based on the hair analysis results. In every case the results were accepted by the presiding judge as a consideration for revocation. In the majority of cases the results were used to revoke probation. One officer reported “they [the test results] have not been challenged ... and all who tested positive were revoked.” Another officer reports “I have used the results in court and all clients were found guilty of show cause and given time to serve.”

#### *Voluntary Confessions*

Half of the respondents (29) reported instances of clients voluntarily confessing to drug use when confronted with the demand to submit a hair sample for testing. The modal response was “1 or 2” confessions. One officer reported receiving five separate confessions during the course of a single substance abuse counseling session!

## Survey (Continued)

### The Purpose of Drug Testing in a Corrections Setting

The results of this survey and numerous conversations with participating officers have led the researchers to think about the goals and purposes of drug testing. Drug testing, regardless of technique, can be used as part of a therapeutic regime or as a tool to achieve criminal justice and punishment goals. As a part of a therapeutic program, drug testing can be used to monitor client progress in a treatment program and as a means for positive feedback should the client continue to abstain from drug use. It can also be used as justification for negative consequences should the client abuse drugs during the course of treatment. As a tool for the realization of criminal justice goals, drug testing should act as a deterrent to drug taking, thus curbing criminal behavior often linked with drug taking. It also serves as a means for monitoring the client's compliance with court or Parole Board conditions of release and as a means of collecting evidence for revocation of supervision should the client fail to abstain from drugs.

Regardless of philosophy or emphasis, practitioners would agree that drug testing should have a deterrent effect on drug taking behavior. In terms of this goal, the drug testing technique itself seems to make a difference. Our research was conceived because many officers felt that urine testing failed to deter. In their own words, "it (urine testing) was a joke". At the moment, there is little hard data to support the deterrent effect of urine testing. See for example some of the comments made by reviewers to SAMHSA's recent request for input on establishing standards for determining the validity of urine specimens collected under the Mandatory Guidelines for Federal Workplace Drug Testing Programs (SAMHSA, 2004). On the other hand, our survey provided some anecdotal data, in the form of numerous confessions by clients when they discovered that they were going to have a hair sample collected rather than a urine sample, to support a conclusion that hair testing deters drug use by probationers and parolees. It is the hope of the researchers that this important topic will be explored in the future.

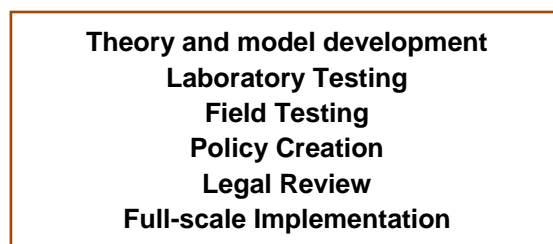
To return to the differences between the treatment goals and punishment goals, it has been our experience that there is some confusion on the part of practitioners concerning the purpose of drug testing. Should drug testing be used as a means of achieving criminal justice goals or as a part of a therapeutic treatment regime? Are these goals antithetical or can they be concurrently achieved? Perhaps more importantly, what do practitioners consider to be the purpose of drug testing?

We suggest that future research identify the job duties, responsibilities and titles of the respondents and ask respondents to identify what they consider to be the purposes of drug testing. Many field officers are employed with drug courts and day monitoring programs. Others actively supervise probationers and parolees. The nature of these jobs would lead to a reasonable conclusion that field officers may be more likely to emphasize deterrence and punishment; while drug courts and treatment programs would be more likely to pursue rehabilitation goals. Again, future research could address this dilemma in order that practices and policy be tailored to specific purpose.

### The Process of Implementing New Technologies

Figure 3 illustrates the process of implementing new technology in the criminal justice workplace. It is safe to say that hair analysis has progressed to the Field Testing stage, but no further at the moment. The testing of technology in a field setting, is an important part of establishing the reliability, validity and practical application of laboratory-developed techniques. Field testing is integral to the creation of a workable product that can withstand the rigors of a practical setting. The current research provides some insight into officer opinions on the use of hair analysis and is an important component in the fielding testing process.

**Figure 3. The Process of Policy Implementation in a Criminal Justice Setting**



Please see *Survey* on page 8

## Survey (Continued)

An essential criterion of any drug testing technology is its admissibility in court. Currently, urine testing results have been accepted with little reservation by state and Federal courts. While hair testing is a recent technology, it has also been accepted by a number of state and Federal courts. The researchers are not aware of any court which has either refused admission of hair testing results or ruled against the use of hair testing as admissible evidence. The issue of hair analysis has been addressed in the Virginia courts and, at this time, Virginia courts are admitting the results of hair testing in the revocation process.

### Some Comments on the Future of Hair Testing

Our survey shows that the respondents are well satisfied with the use of hair testing with an average response of 8.4 (on a scale of one to ten) when asked to rate their overall satisfaction with hair testing. Many also added their own positive and enthusiastic comments to the survey indicating this. The majority of respondents preferred the use of hair testing to urine testing and expressed overwhelming confidence with the use of hair testing results in court. In terms of implementation, it is apparent that officers would prefer a policy that allows the supervising officer to hair test at his or her discretion. They also expressed a preference for adopting hair testing as a supplemental rather than as a sole means of monitoring offenders. It is our conclusion that hair testing was well received by Virginia officers and they would like to add it to their toolbox of techniques for monitoring clients.

Notwithstanding this positive response from field officers, there is a hiatus in the use of hair testing for corrections populations. No federal or state agency in the field of corrections relies on a drug testing regime that primarily employs hair testing at this time. The Virginia Department of Corrections has chosen not to continue the practice of hair analysis for probationers and parolees. This decision was based primarily on financial considerations and was implemented when the federal flow-through funding for the instant research project ran out in 2002.

In what was perhaps the only other state-wide use of hair testing, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has also curtailed the use of hair analysis. In the Pennsylvania program, hair analysis was used as an assessment tool to evaluate the effectiveness of their Drug Interdiction Program in select state prisons. The Program was designed "to rid Pennsylvania's prisons of drugs and to secure inmate and staff safety and [the program] showed dramatic declines in prison inmate drug use...prisons were virtually 99 percent drug-free" (Feucht, 1999:14).

The primary method of drug detection for corrections populations continues to be based on the analysis urine. This may be because of budget concerns over the cost of individual hair test kits (costs for a single hair test can range from \$40 to over \$100 depending on negotiated contract), or the convenience in maintaining the status quo and a reluctance on the part of administrators to invest in the uncertainty of new technology. In any event, the field of corrections has not embraced a widespread use of hair analysis at this time.

Currently, the overwhelming use of hair testing in the field of criminal justice is as a preemployment screening tool for a number of police departments and as part of a post-employment monitoring program. For example, the New York Police Department currently tests all applicants for employment with the department and the Boston Police Department uses hair analysis as a testing device for randomly selected officers as a part of a post-employment monitoring program.

The largest consumer of hair analysis continues to be the private sector. Over 2,000 private employers purchase hair analysis from the Psychemedics Corporation, according to their website. Those businesses, much the same as the participating police departments, use hair testing as a preemployment screening device and as a part of a post-employment drug monitoring program.

We believe that these usage patterns will continue in the immediate future, primarily as a consequence of tightening state corrections budgets and bureaucratic maintenance of the status quo. This is an unfortunate turn of events, because it is our opinion that hair testing provides the officer with a reliable and convenient means of monitoring client drug usage that has the potential to deter drug use in the corrections population. Officers like hair testing, the Virginia courts accept it as evidence in revocation hearings and clients seem to respect its accuracy.

## Survey (Continued)

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## What is Being Done about Gangs in Virginia Three Reports

### GRIP: Richmond's Gang Reduction and Intervention Program

by ESTHER WELCH ANDERSON

Grip Coordinator, Virginia Attorney General's Office

The Attorney General received a three-year grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to administer gang prevention programs and fight gang violence in the City of Richmond. The \$2.5 million grant is one of just four awarded nationally. Our sister cities include Milwaukee, North Miami Beach and Los Angeles. The Office of the Attorney General is administering the program and working closely with the City of Richmond, the Richmond Police Department, and community-based organizations to use new and existing programs to combat gangs and provide children with healthy alternatives to gang involvement. This grant focuses on a small area in the Southside of Richmond. You may access a map detailing the target area at [www.vaag.com](http://www.vaag.com).

The City of Richmond was selected by the Department of Justice because it meets a number of the qualifying criteria, including a significant existing investment in programs that address gang activity, strong indications of citizen involvement, and relatively high rates of crime and gang activity.

The Gang Reduction Program is designed to approach the gang problem by attempting to prevent children from joining gangs through the use of prevention, intervention, suppression and re-entry strategies. The Attorney General has named Bobby Kipper the Executive Director and Esther Welch Anderson the Program Coordinator.

Programs are designed to address the full range of personal, family, and community factors that contribute to high levels of juvenile delinquency and gang activity. Youth have the capacity to make better choices if they have better choices available to them. Our Office's commitment to public safety is strengthened by administering prevention and intervention programs prior to the use of necessary suppression efforts. GRIP programs provide youth with the resources and skills to make positive choices and ultimately build better lives. Even though GRIP programs target at-risk youth, all ages in the community are served. GRIP has over forty initiatives. The following is a sampling of some of the programs: after school and summer programs; citizenship classes; Class Action Summer camps; community events; community role models/mentors; community revitalization; ESL and SSL classes; review of crime data; directed police patrol; GED program; gang training; intelligence sharing; intervention team; job development and growth of small businesses; job training and job placement; mental health and substance abuse counseling; tutoring; Neighborhood Team program; reentry; prenatal, infancy and family health support; a One Stop Resource Center; residential services; sports academy; tattoo removal; truancy and drop out services; wrap around services in schools; and suppression services.

It is our hope that the success of this program will be used as a model in other parts of the City, as well as other parts of the Commonwealth, as we work together to combat the growing problem of gangs across the Country. For more information on GRIP and its services, please visit us at our website at [www.vaag.com](http://www.vaag.com); or visit or call the GRIP One Stop Resource Office located at 4100 Hull Street Road (Southside Plaza) in Richmond. The telephone number is (804) 646-STOP.

#### Additional Information Available

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## Gangs (Continued)

### DISTRICT 25, “GANG” RESPONSE

by PEGGY ANTHONY

Deputy Chief Probation Officer

Loudoun County, only 25 miles outside of Washington, D.C., has been named a top ten digital county government. Quality of life is consistently ranked as one of the best in the nation. More recently, news reports cite Loudoun County ranked as number two in median household income and the northern region is ranked as number two in traffic congestion, 2<sup>nd</sup> to New York City. No doubt about it, Loudoun County is beautiful horse country with gorgeous views to West Virginia. Lavish homes decorate the landscape and Leesburg is a town with many quaint shops and restaurants. The local wineries have even made it to Southern Living Magazine. Not too large yet, but growing and very busy despite efforts by the government to slow the growth.

Today's news reports “Driver Apprehended in Possible Gang-Related Stabbing” in of all places, Loudoun County. This is not the first of such incidences in this area. Loudoun County borders Fairfax, Prince William and Fauquier (also part of District 25) counties. As rich and beautiful as any community can be, gang activity can infiltrate and grow.

The District 25, Leesburg office has been actively involved with Loudoun County for the past several years in addressing community concerns and problems with a rise in local gang activity. ISP Probation and Parole Officer Michael Carlson and Surveillance Officer David Arroniz attend monthly meetings with local law enforcement to dialogue and share intelligence on gang members and their movements in the area.

The officers discuss offenders who have or have had gang affiliations, any recent graffiti observed in the area that might forewarn of gang events, and sharing of photographs. The information provided by the officers to law enforcement is taken seriously and most appreciated as this helps in efforts to take a more proactive role in keeping the community safe for all residents. Information gathered from these meetings is also shared with all Probation and Parole staff. Officer Carlson maintains an office photo album of offenders who are considered to be members of a gang or have tattoos that are suspected to be gang related. Officer's Carlson and Arroniz are also developing field work schedules with local law enforcement. In addition to attending local liaison meetings, the officers also attend regional meetings and training in an effort to stay informed as to what is happening in neighboring jurisdictions. The officers' remain educated and prepared for any gang progression.

Chief Margaret Gates attends the Gang Response and Intervention Team, better known as GRIT, meetings. These meetings include juvenile and court services, parks and recreation, fire department (there have been a number of arsons committed by gangs), local school officials, other law enforcement officials and the team is fairly large and continues to grow. This team takes an overall community approach to gang intervention. At present, Deputy Chief Probation and Parole Officer, Peggy Anthony, is working with other GRIT members on establishing a tattoo removal program with local hospitals. Hot off the presses, a “gang group” is being initiated and Adult Probation and Parole has been invited to provide referrals. The group is led by a team of individuals who received training through Department of Juvenile Justice in providing education and counseling on how to get out and stay out of a gang. They are expecting that this can be used as a sanction by officers and by the Court as a special condition.

We may be unique in that we happen to be working in one of the wealthiest jurisdictions, but district 25 is no different from any other district office working to make a difference in our community.

Please See *Gangs* on Page 12

## Gangs (Continued)

### Fairfax's Approach

by KATHRYN EVANS

Senior Probation Officer

In Fairfax County, Probation and Parole District 29 encounters a number of contacts with members of gangs in the community. Fairfax County houses members of many gangs and cliques, to include: MS-13, 18<sup>th</sup> Street, South Side Locos, Crips, Bloods, Tiny Rascal Gangsters and other Asian street gangs, and White Supremacists.

Fairfax County Police estimate that there are more than 100 gangs in the County. MS-13 (Mara Salvatrucha) is estimated at more than 2500 members in Northern Virginia. Some are on supervision now with District 29. Many of the Pre-Sentence Reports we prepare on gang members are for serious offenses (Assault by Mob, Malicious Wounding, or Murder) which generally result in prison sentences that are significant.

The District 29 office has two officers, Kathy Evans and Terrel Adcock, who are designated as Security Threat Group (STG) Contacts and liaison with the Fairfax County Police Gang Unit. They attend quarterly STG Contacts meetings at the Department of Corrections Academy for Staff Development in reference to gang activity in the institutions and the community. They also have weekly contact with the Fairfax County Police Gang Unit, to obtain information through their database for the District in reference to known gang members on supervision in the community.

At present, a memorandum of understanding is being prepared between District 29 and the Fairfax County Police Department which would allow District 29 officers, Kathy Evans and Terrel Adcock, to have direct access to the database. Assistance is provided to the Gang Unit when they require information on gang members on probation supervision. Typically, both officers do a ride along with the Gang Unit once per quarter at minimum. Terrel Adcock also teaches the Gang class at the Department's Academy for Staff Development in the Basic Skills for new Probation Officers' curriculum.

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## Around the State: News and Briefs

**District 28** (Radford) Sherman P. Lea, Western Regional Director for Community Corrections, advised on September 7, 2006, that Dewey Jennings Chair of the Department's Human Subject Review Committee, that an academic article prepared from data received from Probation and Parole District 28 (Radford) had been approved for submission for publication. The yet unpublished document was the result of an ongoing collaboration between Dr. Martha Wunsch, Addictions Chair at the Edward Via School of Osteopathic Medicine at Virginia Tech, and District 28, which was initiated in 2004. **Senior Officer Anil Goswami** spearheaded the data collection and distribution for the unit. Release of the article is anticipated in the next few months. Congratulations!

**District 38** (Emporia) Probation Officer **Kathy Dickerson** (Emporia) collected \$680 in donations for Special Olympics. Two Judges in the 6th Circuit were among those who contributed. PO Dickerson, who has been the Coordinator for Special Olympics for the District Office for years, is always energetic with this and does an outstanding job. Together with raffle tickets sold by CPO Langley, the District raised \$780.

**District 30** (Hampton) **Marvin Griffin** with the District's Drug Court Marvin Griffin (Hampton) was recently honored by the Hampton/Newport News Community Services Board for their Fourth Quarter "Team Effort Award." He was recognized for his contributions to the Board's commitment to providing quality services to the community. Marvin was awarded a luncheon with CSB Executive Director Chuck Hall as well as recognition at the September Board of Director's meeting.

## Briefs (Continued)

**District 28** (Radford) On September 11, 2006, Chief Probation and Parole Officer **Richard Callahan** addressed the topic, "Career Options in Corrections and Law Enforcement," in a seminar conducted by the Virginia Tech Sociology Department. Chief Callahan detailed the opportunities available in the corrections field and in this Department in particular. The invitation was part of a guest speaker series sponsored by the Sociology Department.

On August 24, 2006, Probation and Parole Officers **JC Castillo and Doug Irvin** appeared at the Pulaski Correctional Unit for their quarterly scheduled presentation to inmates enrolled in the Productive Citizenship Program. These inmates are preparing for re-entry into society. Topics include obtaining employment, supervision expectations and debunking "jail house" myths.

**District 15** (Roanoke) On September 1, 2006, Senior Probation and Parole Officer **Donna Williams** retired. Donna began her career with the Department in July of 1974 as a Probation Officer. She served as a case worker and pre-sentence investigator in the District. Throughout her career, Donna displayed a strong work ethic, commitment and dedication to the job. As a result, she was promoted to Senior Probation Officer of the Intensive Team. Donna was a great leader of this team. Donna's presence in the District will be missed by all, and we wish her well with all her future plans.

**Districts 1 & 5 - Working Together Pays Off** On July 18, 2006, an armed home invasion took place in King William County. Two armed black males kicked in the door of a home while the mother and daughter were present. The perpetrators had their faces covered and shots were exchanged between the mother and the perpetrators who fled the home on foot with the cell phone of one of the occupants of the home.

Throughout the investigation, Investigator Hamilton with the King Williams Sheriff's Office had been gathering information. On September 6, 2006, Investigator Hamilton and **Probation Officer Len Respass** (Gloucester) conferred about several nicknames that had emerged during the investigation. Investigator Hamilton asked the Department of Corrections to enter the nicknames to see if DOC could cross-reference it with their real names. Investigator Hamilton was given "Pizzle" and "Twan" and only that they frequent the area of Mosby Court in Richmond.

On September 11, 2006, PO Len Respass forwarded the information to **Probation Officers Mindy Grizzard and Amanda Bass** in District 1 (Richmond). The District 1 Officer's close contact with local law enforcement enabled them to provide the requested names very quickly. The responses were shared with Investigators Hamilton and Stuart Phillips. By September 14, 2006, one suspect was in custody and made a full confession. Warrants are outstanding for a second individual. This is an outstanding example of collaboration with both internal and external stakeholders supporting our role in public safety. Kudos are due to Len Respass, Mindy Grizzard and Amanda Bass on an outstanding job.

**Eastern Region** The Eastern Region Probation & Parole Officers Committee sponsored the Regional Funfest/Training Event on September 14, 2006, at Portsmouth City Park. Teambuilding Training was provided by Michael Lenahan from the Academy for Staff Development. Southampton Detention Center sponsored an outstanding "cook-out" luncheon. The event was well attended and included an address by Deputy Director James R. Camache. The planning committee did an outstanding job of developing and implementing the event to honor the hard work and dedication of our Probation & Parole Officers.

Community Corrections Staff recently provided a financial donation to Ms. Linda McNatt, who lost her home and possessions in a fire while at work. Ms. McNatt was befriended by the ERO during their many years of association in a shared building. Ms. McNatt is a long-term employee of the Virginian-Pilot Newspaper where she works as a reporter.

## The Soap Box

### Ditto: APPA President Hits the Mark

*Su Tarr*

Mark E. Carey, President of the American Probation and Parole Association, in the Spring issue of *Perspectives*, wrote a provocative article that addressed the “image” problem faced by probation officers. In a nutshell, Carey pointed out that probation officers lack a compelling public image.

After reading Carey’s message, I solicited random impressions from people I encountered in my business, personal and leisure life. Typically, I would ask someone, “What do you think Probation and Parole Officers do?” The answers were mostly off-target. Some compared us to police, others to social workers, and some to truant officers. Some even thought we worked inside the jails. Some responses were amusing. But taken as a whole, it was disheartening to have Carey’s observations so thoroughly confirmed. We have a serious identity problem!

Of the approximately thirty people I encountered, only one - a college student at Virginia Commonwealth University who was majoring in sociology – offered an insightful response. She seemed to have a reasonably accurate understanding of the scope of our responsibilities, and referred to probation officers as “conduits of public safety,” which reflected an understanding of the integral role we play in law enforcement. Admittedly, my survey lacked the controls of a good research design; nonetheless, my experience informed me that only one in thirty (3%) have any conversant understanding of our profession.

Unfortunately, ignorance of our profession is not limited to the “man on the street.” My work in the legislature during recent years has revealed a vast lack of understanding and appreciation for our profession. I cannot tell you how many times I asked legislators not to lump probation officers in with correctional officers, and how many times I have explained the duties and responsibilities of our profession. We would do well to start working on our image problem in the legislature because these are the men and women who are drafting the laws that impact our profession and our future.

As I read Carey’s letter, which he graciously consented to reprint in the *Journal*, I considered how we cheat ourselves when we fail to inform legislators, the community, and administrative leaders about the true nature of the work we do, and when we fail to publicize the issues that affect our ability to do our jobs effectively. It’s easy to get lost in the paperwork that multiplies by the hour. It is easy to say, I do not have time to help improve community relations, to work with the legislature, or to educate the public about our work. It is easy to say, I cannot afford to speak up. But is that true? Perhaps, we should say, “I cannot afford to be silent,” because in our silence we are losing public recognition, support and appreciation for our profession.

The long term cost is not only burnout, but more than that; if we do not sell the value of our profession – if we undersell ourselves – then we must live with the fact that people will never see the value of our contribution to public safety and the positive consequences of our involvement in the lives of offenders. If we fail to forge a positive public image, then we will be lost under that vague umbrella called the Department of Corrections.

Go to the Department of Corrections official website and take a look at the images there. You will find Correctional Officers, barbed wire, canines, guard towers, fugitive photos, but no images for Probation and Parole. In fact, if you look at the Home Page (and this is not criticism of the webpage or the department, but merely to point out the image problem), where do you find Probation and Parole? We are listed under “Offenders.” We are sandwiched between “Visiting and Contacting Inmates” and “Fugitives and Escapees.”

Those on the Institutional side of Corrections and those on the Community side certainly have something in common – we both work with offenders. But our jobs are fundamentally different, and the skills required to complete our tasks are divergently different. By way of comparison, it makes no more sense to say a Proctologist and an Otolaryngologist are the same because they are both doctors and they both work with patients than it does to say that Probation Officers and Correctional Officers are the same because they are both Officers and they both work with offenders. It is important that we maintain our separate and unique identity within the community and within the department and that we work to establish a clear perception and appreciation for our profession.

Our public image problem is multi-faceted. Let’s work on it together.

Please See *Soap Box* on Page 15

## Soap Box (Continued)

### APPA President's Message

By Mark E. Carey

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Before you read on, get comfortable. Sit back, put up your feet, take three deep breaths, holding and then slowly letting the air escape from your lungs at the end of each breath. Clear your mind of work and home pressures. Relaxed? Now, I want you to think in pictures. I'm going to give you a word and let's see what image pops into your head. Ready? Here goes . . .

**Disney™**

**Police**

**Geico**

**Judge**

**Budweiser™**

**Probation**

Let me guess. Within the briefest snap of time, you probably "saw" in your mind's eye Mickey Mouse, handcuffs or a badge, the cute, talking lizard, a black robe and gavel, and the Clydesdale horses. But, when you got to probation there was this "white noise" in your head. No immediate image popped up. You had to think hard to even come up with something, and that "something" was not likely a compelling image.

As a professional in the field of community corrections you already know what I am about to say. We suffer from the lack of a compelling image that could put an indelible and positive mark on the minds of the public, funders and policy makers. That is, unlike Coca-Cola, the National Football League or the Internal Revenue Service we have not branded our image, our field. We are largely faceless to the general public. Surveys of the public usually reveal confusion between probation and parole and frequent survey responses in the "dk" or "na" category (don't know/not applicable).

What is the consequence of our predicament? At times, this is a blessing. By being largely invisible, we are seldom the target of criticism or shrill calls for reform by the public or electorate. We can coast under the radar screen and pop

But, this "benefit" comes with a price. The cost is an unaware public who cannot exercise their right to influence how their tax dollars and policies are being applied in community corrections since they don't know what is or is not happening. The cost is an inability to stockpile goodwill through positive exposure in order to balance or offset high profile media exposure when something goes wrong (as it inevitably will). The cost is our inability to demonstrate our added value to community interests pertaining to public protection and victim restoration because we are a hidden entity and an unknown contributor. We are a silent partner amidst a group of high profile, clear-image players. We are "the others" among the cast of characters. We are the extras among the stars and character actors. The lack of us having a value-added message leaves our field scrambling to be heard when funding decisions are being made and solutions to crime are being bantered about. When the "Clinton cops" were funded, there was not subsequent funding set aside for community supervision despite the fact that the COPS funding would generate a significant increase in arrests, prosecutions, and individuals placed under supervision. A more recent example would be when federal funding for law enforcement was provided, probation and parole was not recognized as an important part of counter terrorism. It costs something to be visible, to be understood. But, the gains outweigh the costs. And, the costs of being invisible are no longer bearable, if they ever were.

Please See *Soapbox* on Page 16

## Soapbox (Continued)

Why are we a field having such a difficult time branding an image of ourselves? There are many reasons, however two stand out. First, our work is imageless. We are not predominantly conducting arrests so handcuffs don't suffice for an image. We spend a lot of time in the field intervening with offenders and talking to collateral contacts. So, what is the image for that: a pair of shoes, paper and pencil, two people sitting at a table? That will neither hold anyone's attention nor does it give a compelling image of what value our work adds toward public safety and victim restoration. Secondly, we have suffered from an identity crisis. We do many things as a profession such as conducting investigations, providing the courts with information, monitoring, counseling, surveillance, changing offender behavior, making treatment referrals, assisting victims, and developing intermediate sanctions to save costs. How do you put that eclectic collection of duties into an image? As a field, we can't seem to agree on our primary identity, or primary objective, or an image that adequately describes what we do without oversimplifying and even misleading the receiver of that communication.

And so, for decades we have been wringing our hands and yearning for some way out of this dilemma. It is time to take control of our own destiny and brand our value.

Not everyone has been sitting idly by waiting for some solution. Some jurisdictions have taken this on and are making a difference. As an example, consider the Arizona "Probation Works" initiative. Arizona community corrections' jurisdictions decided around the year 2000 to portray the value of probation to the public through a simple message: Probation Works. On their documents you will see the message over and over again: Probation Works, Probation Works, Probation Works. In some jurisdiction the surveillance officers are wearing jackets with PROBATION in clearly visible letters. Work crew vans have community supervision signs on them. And, placed-based supervision officers are knocking on doors to let the community know that they are present and available to serve them. There is a reason private companies air their commercials and publish their ads on visual, audio and written media over and over again. It is because we remember through repetition. Imagine if our profession had an image and a hard hitting and memorable saying, and that we repeated this over and over again across each jurisdiction throughout the world.

One of the images I cannot get out of my mind is McGruff the Crime Dog who delivered the message of crime prevention. If you recall, his memorable saying was "Take a bite out of crime". What if the community corrections profession could develop a consensus on our primary identity, our value-add, and an image that portrayed this? I believe that it would help us communicate with the public, add to our predominantly faceless image, and convey a compelling message that community supervision is a good investment towards safer communities and victim satisfaction.

Don't get me wrong. There is no better way to communicate our value than in providing solid, meaningful and relevant service to the public. It is word of mouth that makes the biggest difference. However, the vast majority of community corrections' personnel don't wear uniforms, drive in clearly marked cars or have TV shows or movies made about them. And, our encounters with the public are far less frequent than those the public has with police or Starbucks.

The American Probation and Parole Association is seeking to do something about this. An effort has begun to develop our identity, image and branding message. Bill Burrell and Elyse Clawson are leading an initiative to extract the best thinking from the field, hold focus groups, consult with marketing experts and present to the association some concepts. Once we agree on a message and image, we will be seeking ways to provide materials to community corrections agencies and media outlets so that we can meet our objective to repeat the message that "Community Corrections Works."

Who knows? Maybe we will get our own Geico lizard or McGruff dog in the process.

[Visit the APPA on the Web](#)

*The views expressed in articles published in [The Journal](#) are those of the authors alone. They are not intended to represent the views or opinions of the Virginia Probation and Parole Association, its Board, or any entity affiliated with the VPPA.*

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### ***LOUDOUN AFTERCARE PROGRAM (LAP)***

*by Peggy Anthony*

Several Loudoun County local churches came together in September, 2005 to establish a faith-based re-entry program for offenders being released from prison to community. Mentors receive intense training that includes presentations and education from community resources to law enforcement, including probation and parole. Probation and Parole Officer Miran McClendon is actively involved and serves as a liaison for the District 25 office and LAP. Mentors begin their mentoring 3 – 6 months prior to the release date and work with the offenders to establish goals to begin their transition. A Life Plan is created with the inmate prioritizing what their needs will be upon release and what they can begin to work on while in prison or jail. The mentor then works with the inmate to help them accomplish these goals to create a smoother transition back into the community. The mentor will attempt to be at the prison or the jail on the release date to bring them back to Loudoun County. The mentor will also work with family members when appropriate, help with job search and a place to live. The mentors will also assist the offender in keeping their supervision obligations such as meetings with the officer and community service. In a place and time where resources are limited, this is a much welcomed program.

**Mira McClendon** joined Virginia Corrections in 2004 after a year in Fairfax and Loudoun County Community Corrections programs. He moved to the Northern Virginia area from Indianapolis where he had worked for four years as a Probation Officer and four years as a Marion County Probation Supervisor.