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## Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week: July 21-27

*By Judge Larry Gist, Member*

Community Corrections is an essential element of any criminal justice system. Probation and parole officers keep our streets safe by providing supervision, guidance and the tools needed to help individuals improve their lives. Their work is hard and it can be dangerous, but it is vital to the safety of our communities.

This year, National Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week is scheduled for July 21-27. During this week, please take a moment and thank those individuals who work in the field of probation and parole. From the officers on the street to the administrative staff and managers in the offices, thank them for changing lives and building futures - better futures for those they supervise and for the communities around them.

In Texas, more than 405,000 individuals are under some form of community supervision, also known as adult probation. This is the largest criminal justice supervision population in the state. Within the parole arena, almost 88,000 parolees are under active supervision in Texas.

Probation and parole differ in that probation is a form of sentencing imposed by a court order and is generally used in lieu of incarceration. Its terms and length are set by the court and remain in ef-

fect as long as the probationer meets certain standards of conduct. Parole on the other



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hand, follows a prison term. It is generally a conditional release based on a parole board decision. In either case, probation or parole, individuals under supervision can be sent to prison or be returned to prison for rule violations or new offenses.

Parole and probation are similar in that both types of officers not only supervise offenders, but also conduct assessments and case planning. Elements in common are moni-

### **CJAD Skills conference: July 22-25**

Coinciding with National Probation, Parole and Community Supervision Week, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Community Justice Assistance Division (CJAD) will host the 23rd Skills for Effective Intervention Conference July 22-25 in Austin.

The Skills Conference brings community supervision professionals together for four days of dynamic speakers and innovative workshops, with an emphasis on skill-based development and the latest research-based information. Participants will also have the opportunity to network with their colleagues from across the state. Registration and hotel information are available on the TDCJ website.

In addition, probation and parole offices throughout the state will organize events to recognize the service of officers in their area. Information on these activities can be obtained through your local community supervision and corrections department or your district parole office.

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toring, intervention, advocacy and referrals. Through monitoring, both probation and parole officers ensure compliance with conditions of supervision such as drug testing, community service, victim restitution, and employment. Intervention services are provided by both through crisis management, counseling, substance abuse treatment, job training, family and social support, and relapse support. Probation and parole officers also provide advocacy services related to treatment, education and employment, training, budget, and community involvement. As to referrals, probation and parole officers provide information and access to community resources, as well as facilitate communication and coordinate with other agencies to help those they supervise.

Both parole and probation have been around since before the mid-1800s. John Augustus, a Boston cobbler, is credited as the “Father of Probation.” In 1841, he persuaded the Boston Police Court to release an adult drunkard into his custody rather than sending him

to prison. His efforts at reforming his first charge were successful, and he soon convinced the court to release other offenders under his supervision. By 1878, Massachusetts passed the first probation statute, mandating an official state probation system. Today, probation is authorized in all 50 states, and many foreign nations have adopted approaches based on the U.S. prototype.

Chief credit for developing the early parole system is usually given to Alexander Maconochie, who was in charge of the English penal colony at Norfolk Island, and to Sir Walter Crofton, who directed Ireland’s prisons. Critical of defined prison terms, Mr. Maconochie developed a system of rewards for good conduct, labor and study. In 1840, he implemented a process at Norfolk Island wherein prisoners could progress through stages of increased responsibility and ultimately gain freedom.

Sir Crofton attempted to implement Mr. Maconochie’s system when he became ad-

ministrator of the Irish Prison System in 1854. He felt prison programs should be directed toward reform, and that release should be awarded based on achievement and positive change. Within his system, following a period of strict imprisonment, offenders moved to an “intermediate prison” where they could earn marks for work performance, behavior and educational improvements. Eventually they would be released on parole supervision and be required to submit monthly reports to the police. A police inspector would help them find jobs and oversee their activities. These concepts of intermediate prisons, assistance and supervision after release contributed to the modern system of parole today.

During the week of July 21-27, people across the nation will recognize the important work of community correction professionals. Let us join in and express our appreciation as well. Their work directly impacts our communities, as it provides individuals the opportunity to change and to build better futures for themselves and their families. ●