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UM PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS ASSIST  
IN REHAB PROGRAM AT STATE PRISON  
By Karen Gookin  
UM Information Services

Missoula--

Rehabilitation of prisoners is an ideal which is hard to reach, according to two University of Montana graduate psychology students who are offering group and individual psychological services to inmates at the Montana State Prison, Deer Lodge.

Ray Moore, Billings, and Barry Quinn, Bellflower, Calif., drive to the prison twice a week to talk privately with inmates there who have volunteered for the rehab program, initiated in January 1970 by the UM Department of Psychology.

Moore visits the prison each Wednesday and Quinn goes every Friday. The two also alternate most Saturdays.

The students are under the supervision of Dr. Robert R. Zimmermann, Dr. John G. Watkins and Dr. John M. Atthowe, UM psychology professors.

The rehabilitation program, originally funded by the state, has two main objectives, Quinn and Moore said--to help the men do "easy time while they are in there, and to help them adjust when they get out."

Quinn said that when the program first started in January 1970 the inmates were "curious," but it wasn't long before the prisoners "came because they wanted to help themselves."

Word of the "no-strings-attached" program got around the prison, the psychology students said. "Gradually we won the reputation that we could be trusted by the prisoners," Moore said.

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"The success of the program depends on our confidences," Moore continued. No prison officials are present during private or group therapy sessions, and the inmates can freely discuss what they feel are specific problems of the institution and vent their personal problems at the same time.

Quinn and Moore hold individual therapy sessions for about eight hours during morning and afternoon sessions. Group sessions are held during the evening when inmates must give up their recreation time if they want to attend.

Moore, who holds a bachelor's degree and master's degree in engineering from Stanford University, Stanford, Calif., and who worked for 11 years as an engineer, holds therapy sessions with two groups of "old cons." Quinn has one group of younger, more "rebellious" inmates, and the two share one other group.

From four to 12 inmates are present during each group session, and both Quinn and Moore work privately with about a dozen inmates.

Both men agreed that the group sessions usually involve more general discussions of the inmates' problems living within the institution. During the individual sessions personal problems and adjustments are discussed.

"We don't try to push society's ideas on them," Quinn explained. "We just try to provide them with a different way of looking at their lives within our society."

Moore said that during the individual sessions he and Quinn try to help "bring about changes that the individuals want themselves," and try to help them understand things that happened to them in the past.

Quinn, who holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Montana State University, Bozeman, said that the inmates "are probably easier clients than those on the 'outside' would be."

The prisoners are forced "to communicate on a deeper level," he explained, "because they all live together, day and night, and need to get rid of their hostilities as fast as possible."

"A prisoner has to have a lot going for him when he gets 'outside'," Quinn continued, "and he's aware of that. They're human, you know, and they have a hell of a lot of pressure."

"One of the biggest problems evident in working with the inmates is their low self-concept," Moore said.

A prison is "hardly conducive" for training in accepting responsibilities and in decision-making, but a certain amount of pride and self-respect is necessary if the prisoner is to adjust well in society when he is set free, Moore continued.

"All the old cons have ways of doing time smoothly," Moore commented, "and this, I think, is simply a process of reducing their self-concept."

From his experiences in the prison, Moore said he has come to believe that the older convicts' low self-concept within the prison is one reason they keep returning to the institution.

"While they're 'inside'," he said, "they know how to repress their emotions and sensitivity--but when they get on the 'outside', all they can feel is hate. They react to the feelings they repressed while in prison. and they end up back in the institution."

"Most of these guys are very intelligent," Moore continued, referring to the older convicts he works with.

"Bucking the institution is an enjoyable game to some of them, and in some cases they can't cope with any other kind of living."

"Some of my guys have really changed" since they began therapy, Moore said, but he is quick to add that rehabilitation is a long process.

"Once you're fighting the system," Quinn observed, "it's hard to see yourself as the kind of guy who can make it 'outside'. But if you don't fight back, you lose all your self-respect and gradually develop a very low image of yourself."

Both UM students agreed that the rehabilitation program has been a success up to date. Part of the success, they said, might be a result of the image the two students bring to the prison.

"We represent a contact with the outside world," Moore said. "We're not part of the prison system. We're a symbol that the world hasn't forgotten them."