

Prison Hospice Helps Dying Inmates

Inmate volunteers win praise from national health care commission

A program that provides end of life care to dying inmates at Oregon State Penitentiary has received praise from the National Commission on Correctional Health Care.

The prison hospice program was selected from more than 500 prisons, jails, juvenile detention and confinement facilities as the commission's 2001 Program of the Year.

The award was presented earlier this month to the penitentiary's health services manager, William Cahal, a registered nurse.

The commission noted that health services staff not only provided compassionate care to dying penitentiary inmates but freely assisted sister facilities in Oregon and other states to establish their own similar programs.

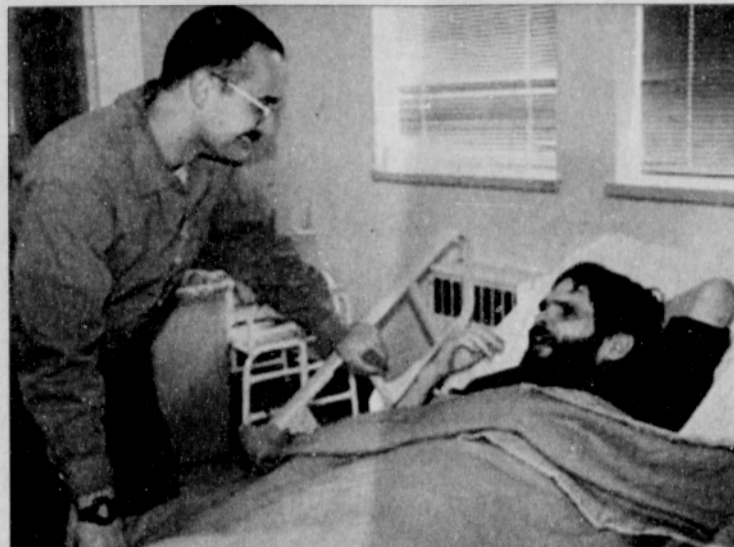
The Hospice Program at the penitentiary is just over two years old. The core of the program are inmate volunteers; they provide assistance to dying inmates much in the same way as community hospice volunteers help terminally ill members of the community.

Each inmate volunteer receives 44 hours of community-standard instruction in death and dying. They are allowed to assist patients with daily living needs and help to enhance the quality of patients' lives during their final days. There are currently 22 trained inmate volunteers.

Officials said more inmates will die in prison because the criminal population is graying. For example, the Oregon Department of Corrections has more than 60 inmates over age 70.

In addition, criminals, in general, have often not taken care of their health prior to incarceration; they are a population at high risk for increased infectious diseases, largely because of drug use; are at high risk for prior trauma; and are being sentenced to longer periods of time in prison.

Twenty-eight inmates have been enrolled in the hospice program since it opened in May 1999. Twenty-four died in prison, two were released back to the



Inmate hospice volunteer Mark Wilson shares a light moment with a terminally ill inmate at Oregon State Penitentiary.

community and there are two active cases now.

"There are a lot of ways for an incarcerated person to die, some more comfortable, humane, kinder, and dignified than others" noted Corrections Director Dave Cook. "The OSP Hospice Program has had a positive effect on

the penitentiary and the Department of Corrections.

"The inmate population knows that they will be treated compassionately, that they will have control of end-of-life issues, that their pain will be managed and that they will be allowed to die surrounded by their family, with dignity."

School Essays on Independence Sought

Cash awards totaling \$5,000 are available to Oregon high school students through the eighth annual Independence Essay Competition, organized by Cascade Policy Institute.

The theme of the essay competition, "exploring the foundations of freedom," is intended to provoke students to study American history and consider the meaning of liberty. Students are asked to write an essay answering the question: What is the proper role of government in a free society?

The contest is open to all Oregon high school students. The

deadline for entries is March 15; for guidelines visit www.cascadepolicy.org/essay.asp or call 503-242-0900. An independent panel of judges will select the winners, who will receive up to \$1,000 each. The judges are Dominic Biggi, vice president of Beaverton Foods, Inc.; Lois Ditmars, vice president of Peterkort Management Co.; William C. "Chris" Girard Jr., chairman of the board of Plaid Pantries; Susan Nielsen, associate editor of the *Oregonian*; and Scott Staff, vice president for college relations for Lewis & Clark College.

Consumer Group Warns of Hazardous Toys

(AP)—Little balls, balloons and toys that include small parts are among the toys consumers need to be careful about when buying Christmas gifts, according to a state consumer group.

The Oregon Student Public Interest Research Group has released a national report outlining categories of toys that the organization said poses dangers to children.

Andrew Bockis of OSPIRG said choking is the major cause of problems, accounting for 59 percent of the 207 toy-related

deaths reported nationally since 1990. Balloons were the leading cause of toy choking deaths last year.

"Consumers should avoid latex balloons altogether for children under 8," Bockis said.

He said balls with a diameter of less than 1.75 inches are illegal for sale when intended for play by children under 3.

A cardboard tube from a toilet paper roll can be used as a rule-of-thumb measuring device, Bockis said. He said objects that can fit inside the tube pose choking dan-

gers to children.

In the national report issued by the related U.S. Public Interest Research Group, the organization urges consumers to be cautious about buying toys online via Internet sites.

A check of online sites of 44 toy retailers showed that none posted the choke hazard safety warnings that are required by law for toys sold in stores, the report said.

The report also warns that scooters are dangerous and have caused thousands of inju-

ries requiring emergency room treatment.

Bill O' Neill, a spokesman for Marion County Fire District 1, suggested that safety gear such as helmets be included when giving scooters or rollerblade skates as gifts.

He also urged parents not to toss "everything into the same toy box" so children of all ages in a household have easy access to all forms of toys.

"We pull toy cars from ears, noses and throats," on emergency medical aid runs, he said.

Expert in Geriatrics and Ethics to Lead OHSU

Doctor returns to Oregon to become the schools' first female dean

A leading expert in geriatric medicine, medical ethics and the quality of clinical care take over as dean of the School of Medicine at Oregon Health & Science University in January.

Dr. Christine Cassel is currently a professor at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City. She also directs the Geriatric Research, Education and Clinical Center at the Bronx Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

"She is one of the most highly respected medical educators in the country, an international authority on the care of older people and an experienced and gifted administrator," said Dr. Jordan J. Cohen, president of the Association of American Medical Colleges.

Early in her career, Cassel spent four years in Portland.

From 1979 to 1981, she was a fellow in geriatrics at OHSU and



Dr. Christine Cassel

the Portland Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Then from 1981 to 1983, she was assistant professor of medicine, and public health and preventive medicine at OHSU.

OHSU president Peter Kohler says Cassel provides exceptional leadership as the medical school continues its rise to the top ranks of medical education. Cassel will be the first female dean at OHSU.

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