

ASSOCIATION OF STATE CORRECTIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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In Honor and Memory of Tom Clements, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections Assassinated in the Line of Duty – March, 2013

This award was created in 2015 to honor the memory of Tom Clements, Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections, who was assassinated in the line of duty in March 2013. This award was established to identify one ASCA member who displays innovation and achievement, two of Clements qualities before his life was taken from us. Below describes the qualifications for this award as well as who may submit a nomination.

The nominee must be an active ASCA member of at least two years, and must have demonstrated that he/she regularly participates and contributes to ASCA events and/or projects.

The Clements Award distinguishes a member who has initiated an outstanding innovation or achievement that embodies the vision of corrections reform embraced by Executive Director Clements. This vision includes but is not limited to reforms in the area of administrative segregation, recidivism, parole supervision, prison programming and any other successful reform which is progressive in nature.

Nominations may be submitted by the nominee's subordinates, Governor, Sheriff in the case of a county member, Mayor in the case of a city member or designee (or governing committee).

A biography of Executive Director Clements that emphasizes his exemplary life in corrections, the personal and professional qualities that made him outstanding, and the circumstances of his assassination can be found on the following pages.

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Tom Clements

On a Tuesday evening, around 8:30 p.m. on March 19, 2013, Tom Clements and his wife, Lisa, were at home in Monument, Colorado, just north of Colorado Springs, watching the President speak on TV.

The doorbell rang. When Tom opened the front door, an unhinged parole absconder disguised as a pizza deliveryman shot him in the chest with a nine-millimeter handgun. 911 response attempts to revive him were unsuccessful, and Tom Clements died that night, leaving behind his wife and two daughters, Rachel and Sarah.

Tom was Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections. The assassination sent shockwaves throughout the Department as well as the national corrections community.

At the peak of his Corrections career, he was pursuing his vision of what needed to be accomplished in Colorado, and implementing reforms and innovations to improve the corrections system. That ended with his answer to the bell.

Tom was not only a leader in corrections. He was a man who "loved being a father, a husband, a son, a brother, an uncle, and a caring friend." His widow stated "... [He] walked the walk, and practiced what he preached...." " His impact on others [was] truly his legacy."

Tom loved the outdoors. Cycling, hiking, snowshoeing, and fishing brought him true pleasure. The harder the hike, the better: "Just one more mile," he would say. He and his girls enjoyed travel, Elvis, adventure, family hiking trips, and the theater.

He has been described as dedicated, funny, and caring--plus an expert on the latest and best methods in his field--a man who chose the Colorado job over retirement. Lisa commented, "He really did believe in redemption but he certainly recognized evil."

Immediately after Tom's death, a witness reported seeing a dark-colored car with its engine running at the time of

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the shooting, followed by a person driving away in that same car. Evidence pointed to a 28-year-old parolee with an extensive criminal record and membership in a white-supremacist prison gang in the Department where he had spent most of his time in segregation. On March 14th, 2013, his 46th day on parole, he absconded, taking with him a nine-millimeter gun. On March 17th, he shot a 27-year-old man wearing a pizza uniform that he would use to disguise his intentions. Before the killing, he coerced the victim to read a written statement into a handheld voice recorder. In paraphrase, the statement accused the Department of fascism and inhumanity, lack of empathy for prisoners or their families, and gross disrespect. It declared that his group would now do the same to the Department, taking comfort in knowing that they would “leave your wives without husbands and your children fatherless.”

Two days later, the shooter used the same 9mm gun to shoot Tom Clements in the chest, then fled to Texas, where a sheriff's deputy recognized that his car matched the car suspected in the Clements killing in Colorado and pulled it over. The assailant shot the deputy in the head, causing significant brain damage, but not death. After a high speed chase, the shooter collided with a semi-truck, then rolled out of the vehicle firing at police, who returned fire that killed him on the spot. The gun found in the stolen Cadillac matched the ballistics of the gun used in the killings of the deliveryman and Clements.

Tom Clements committed his life to serving the correctional population as a teenager, having been deeply touched by visiting his uncle in prison. He prepared himself academically for correctional challenges, earning an Associate's degree in Arts and Sciences in Criminal Justice in 1977, a Bachelor's degree in Sociology in 1979 and a Master's degree in Public Administration in 1994.

He began working in Missouri corrections in 1979, and over his 31 years there, he occupied a variety of increasingly challenging positions in probation and parole services as well as prisons. He was Director of Adult Institutions when he retired in 2011.

Not yet ready to end his career, he moved to Colorado to become Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections where he served for two years until his death in 2013.

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Tom's Vision, Mission, Innovations and Reforms

During his thirty-one years in Missouri and his last two years at the helm of the Colorado Department of Corrections, Tom pursued his career-long progressive vision of corrections as an entity that supports the redemption of offenders. Thus, he set out to:

- Address offenders' personal challenges with appropriate treatment;
- Practice firm and fair responses to disciplinary and uncertain situations,
- Provide appropriate programs that prepare offenders for reentry; and
- Build bridges to all community services to enhance chances for success.

Major Contributions in Missouri

Probation and Parole – Twenty Years of Major Contributions

- Development of Intensive Supervision Probation Services and service on the Community Corrections Task Force;
- Development and implementation of sex offender registration laws in Missouri;
- Advocacy for evidence based practices and risk reduction in the community;
- Transition from Prison to Community Initiative;
- Served on Supreme Court's Drug Court Task;

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- Focus on training relative to reentry and risk reduction;
 - Participation on the Reentry Policy Council; and
 - Support for organizations in promoting the philosophy of reentry, including the Urban (Institute, the Center for Effective Public Policy and the National Institute of Corrections.

Division of Adult Institutions – Ten Years of Achievement

- Creation of a Monthly Management Report documenting statistics for a variety of Division of Adult Institutions practices that showed trends and historic information that to be used for analysis and future planning. He would always say “You get what you inspect, not what you expect.” (
- Development of an Integrated Case Management Planning and the Transitional Accountability Plan starting at the beginning of and throughout an offender’s incarceration.
- Specific implemented improvements included:
 - Updated offender conduct rules & sanctions;
 - New professional standards for case managers;
 - Realignment of case managers to address reentry needs;
 - An external classification system for offenders based upon risk;
 - Creation of an institutional investigator to focus on non-criminal allegations, and

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- Development of a gender specific assessment for female offenders.
 - Expansion of the use of video court, tele-health, and other initiatives to enhance public safety. (
 - Realignment of Correctional Officers, Sergeants, and Lieutenants to ensure cost efficiency.

Contributions in Colorado Department of Corrections – During Two Years of Service Before Assassination

Shortly after taking leadership of CDOC, Tom launched a campaign to address several critical issues he had identified; administrative segregation; appropriate management and treatment of the mentally ill; reentry; and the need to base all decisions on accurate and reliable data.

Administrative Segregation. Tom was deeply concerned about offenders who were being housed in isolation for excessively long periods of time. Tom's major drive was to address that situation, and he was an avid participant in ASCA's major new committee on the proper use of segregation in prisons. Here is what he was achieving at the time of his death in that regard:

- He established a process to review all offenders placed in administrative segregation to determine the appropriateness of the placement and the length of time to reside there. (
- He dramatically reduced the number of offenders in administrative segregation by nearly 50% from August of 2011 to March of 2013.

Treatment for the Mentally Ill. Tom was a progressive leader who cared about the mental health of his prisoners, and was passionate about addressing inmates who have mental health issues. During his tenure he:

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- Identified mental health issues among inmates who would be assigned to administrative segregation;
 - Deterred those offenders with mental health treatment needs from going to administrative segregation.
 - Launched an initiative to establish a standalone Residential Treatment Program for offenders with mental illness, and
 - Took the initiative to ensure their transition into society when released from prison.

Reentry of Prisoners into the Community at Release. Throughout his career, which included the broad scope of Probation, Corrections, and Parole service, Tom's eye was always on the prize of successful reintegration of offenders into the community. To that end, he is recognized as a major player in Reentry.

- Building partnerships in the external environment.
- Preparing offenders to return to the community with support systems and tools for ensuring their success..
- Working with inmates who were released directly into the community from administrative segregation.

Data-driven Decision-making. Tom was a stickler for producing the numbers and counting the odds when looking at correctional issues and planning innovations.

- He was forever digging for accurate and reliable data to inform his decisions.
- He found that he was more likely to gain funding for projects by presenting supporting numbers and facts to the budget decision-makers.
- He used outcome-based performance planning for possible new initiatives.
- His reforms and projects were data-driven—before, during, and after launch.

Professional remarks:

Kevin H. Kempf, Executive Director
ASCA Headquarters * 1105 2nd Street South * Nampa Idaho, 83651
Phone * (208) 608-5827 WWW.ASCA.NET

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A longtime friend read at his memorial service: "He rode his bike because he loved the wind," "He answered the door because he wasn't afraid."

One prisoner wrote, "It felt like our lives could change, that things could get better." Another said, "It was the first time I had hope."

"Tom Clements dedicated his life to being a public servant, to making our state a better place and he is going to be deeply, deeply missed."

"[He] was known as a progressive leader who cared about the mental health of his prisoners and worked to ensure their transition into society once released."

"[He] oversaw one of the coldest, toughest worlds with the warmest and most tender of hearts."

"[He] was a great man who led a "quiet crusade" to reform the state's correctional system." "It was a belief he had at the core of his person, that anyone could be redeemed."

Tom epitomized the public servant who fulfilled a true calling to service. He loved his staff and viewed their service alongside him as a pleasure.

The Governor praised Tom for the innovations he had made, which helped decrease Colorado's recidivism rate and dramatically reduce the number of inmates in administrative segregation.

ASCA's Tom Clements Award

Tom Clements inspired everyone he knew to demonstrate purpose and determination to improve corrections. He epitomized the virtues of vision, mission, innovation, reform, and the fair and effective treatment of prisoners from incarceration through reentry into their communities. In the wake of his assassination, ASCA has been inspired to present the Tom Clements award annually to a director who most closely reflects his virtues and accomplishments as

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a leader in the corrections profession.

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