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DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION

W.R.D.C.C. OVERVIEW

The Western Reception Diagnostic and Correctional Center in St. Joseph, MO went "on line" in the fall of 1999. This state-of-the-art facility serves the western third of Missouri counties, receiving newly sentenced offenders, parole returns, treatment offenders, and others assigned by the courts.

W.R.D.C.C., originally a satellite of Western Missouri Correction Center, was established in 1993 to aid in combating that year's great flood. In 1994, the Park Building Treatment Center became operational; utilizing buildings formerly occupied by a state mental hospital. The large facility now comprising W.R.D.C.C. was approved for construction in 1996.

The complex includes three major components, R & D, general population and treatment. The centerpiece is the Reception and Diagnostic Center. This three story, 220,000 square feet building houses the Administrative offices, medical facilities, food service area, visiting room, receiving area, and diagnostic offices.

A five-story structure connected to the main R & D building provides secure housing for 500 offenders undergoing diagnostic screening. This area is controlled by sophisticated electronic security systems that control and monitor activities within this maximum-security area. All diagnostic processing, which normally takes approximately 30 days, is conducted in this area.

W.R.D.C.C.'s general population housing units are home to 1,100 offenders assigned there primarily from the Diagnostic Unit. These minimum-security men are citizens of a "Parallel Universe". This means that they must meet expectations remarkably similar to those in "free" society: obtain a job, go to school, be law abiding (no conduct violations) and schedule their own activities as much as possible.

Housing Unit One (approximately 700 population) comprises the lower two Parallel Universe phases, and privileges are few. Those responsible enough to advance to higher phases are in Housing Unit Six (approximately 406) where greater opportunities and privileges are possible. These opportunities include consideration for work release and other premium pay jobs, better visiting, and a much more open living environment.

The Western Region Treatment Center (WRTC) houses 320 offenders undergoing treatment for substance abuse related issues. Those in treatment face a rigorous regimen involving various aspects of accepted treatment practices. Treatment staff works with the courts and Probation and Parole to ensure that offenders are appropriately placed in treatment and the community when released.

The approximately 700 staff (state employees and contract personnel) is proud of the demanding job they do and of the community as a whole. They donate, on the average, over \$12,000 a year to adopted families through the holiday charitable campaign. The staff also made cash donations (through the W.R.D.C.C. Personnel Club) to women's shelters, youth facilities, and other worthy causes. Staff support for Special Olympics raises thousands of dollars yearly for this wonderful organization.

Offenders also want to pay back a little to the community through various restorative justice projects. Their main contribution is through "Bikes for Tykes". The men of W.R.D.C.C. annually rebuild hundreds of bicycles for deserving young people and organizations. Offenders also contribute time and money to other charitable projects throughout the year.

W.R.D.C.C.'s work release program benefits both the taxpayer and the offender. The citizens of Missouri benefit because they save hundreds of thousands of dollars per year when state and local agencies hire offenders to do jobs that otherwise wouldn't get done. The Missouri Department of Transportation relies on offender labor to clean up roadsides, mow grass, and clear brush. The city of St. Joseph uses offenders to work in various cleanup projects at the landfill and at the airport. These agencies could not afford to hire anyone, even at minimum wage, to accomplish these tasks. This frees staff and scarce funding to accomplish other tasks that benefit community residents. Offenders are paid \$7.50 per day as opposed to \$7.50/\$8.50 per month for most institutional jobs. They may learn a skill, learn how to work, and take responsibility for that work. Perhaps nothing more important may be learned in a correctional setting, and the money earned may be sent home to support offender families.

W.R.D.C.C. has proven to be a good neighbor of the St. Joseph area. A \$16 million dollar payroll, good jobs, and local procurement, whenever possible, contribute substantially to the local economy; a secure facility, staffed by professionals, ensures a safe environment for everyone; a commitment to providing the finest correctional services anywhere will continue to be our top priority.