



The Future Awaits

Tony C. Parker

ACA 107th President

Thank you, Gary, ACA members, and everyone who supports corrections across this country and around the world. I am so humbled and honored to be given such a special opportunity to represent each of you as the President of the American Correctional Association! There are a few people I would like to offer a special “Thank You” to. Immediate Past President Gary Mohr, thank you for your relentless pursuit of excellence for the American Correctional Association over the last two years. Two years that in no way can be called normal and was full of distractions, unforeseen tragedies and a pandemic that has forever changed the way we live and associate with each other. Throughout everything, you have remained steadfast in your duties as President and never lost faith in the mission of ACA. To my TDOC family who have so unselfishly carried and supported me over the last 38 years, I will never be able to repay you for your continued dedication and support. I have been blessed over the years to be influenced and counseled by great correctional leaders and mentors such as Richard Stalder, George Little, Derrick Schofield, Robert Conley, and many other who invested their time and resources in me. I want to thank Jim and Betty

Gondles for believing in me and for relentless efforts in keeping the American Correctional Association recognized as the primary resource for correctional performance standards and expected practices at home and abroad. Finally, I want to thank my beautiful wife Misty and my children for their love and support.

I recognize that over the last year, we have all been through one of the most challenging times of our lives. But today, I want to about the courage and the strength that I have witnessed during this period. The word ‘hero’ can take on different meanings for different people. The dictionary definition of a hero describes a legendary figure of great strength or ability, an outstanding warrior or soldier, a person admired for achievements and qualities, or one that shows great courage. Whatever definition you prefer, any one of them can be used to describe our heroic correctional professionals.

Ladies and gentlemen, our front-line Correctional Officers, Health Care Workers, Counselors, Teachers, Food Service workers, all support staff and others who have continued to deliver on the mission of corrections, are all true heroes in every sense of the word; and that includes our corporate and private partners who stood beside us along

the way. It is safe to say that anyone who has worked in corrections understands that it takes all of us working together to deliver on our mission.

Some of the most uplifting and sobering moments I’ve experienced over the last year happened as I looked around many of our cities where businesses were closed, streets were bare, and people were quarantined inside their homes. But in our prisons, jails, detention facilities and community corrections our faithful employees continued to show up and provide the public service that our nation depends on.

Let me be clear, we must all recognize that the heroes of corrections are those we call ‘boots on the ground.’ They work in our facilities, our jails, probation/parole offices, detention facilities, juvenile centers. They show up even during a global pandemic and social unrest. They perform the often-thankless work of public safety because that’s what true heroes do.

I am reminded of Theodore Roosevelt’s speech, “The Man in the Arena” when I think of our correctional family:

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done

them better. The credit belongs to the man who actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust, sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is not effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

To each of you whose face is marred with dust, sweat and blood, THANK YOU for being our heroes!

Over the next two years, I ask that each of you assist me in continuing to deliver the mission of the American Correctional Association in providing a professional organization for public and private partners to come together for a common goal of improving the justice system. But I also invite you to also focus on a few key initiatives:

My focus, these next two years, will be on exploring new strategies to enhance safety within our facilities, as well as, helping others better understand the complexity and the true nature of our work in corrections. We will achieve this goal by focusing on 4 key areas:

- Helping others to see corrections as a place that offers opportunities for positive transformation through effective rehabilitation. It is my belief that this the true mission of Corrections! Our correctional staff provide a great example of true public servants and professionals. I believe we must find

innovative ways to help elevate the public's perception of corrections work and as stated in our goals, continue to lead and serve as the voice of the accrediting body of corrections both here in the United States and around the world.

- I plan to work closely with higher educational institutions in expanding the training/educational opportunities for Correctional staff through the use of ACA's world class e-learning tools and extensive training programs.
- I think we all can agree that most correctional populations have seen a significant increase in individuals with Mental Health diagnosis. The American Correctional Association has been very successful in providing Correctional Behavioral Health training to many agencies. As we continue to expand this initiative. I would ask that we explore additional opportunities that will make the correctional environment a safer place to work and live. I want to expand our focus on providing training for correctional staff in recognizing and responding to the signs and symptoms of mental illness as well as providing the tools for staff to use in skilled de-escalation techniques that will reduce the need for physical intervention, through multi-disciplinary service teams.
- Finally, I want to continue to expand the use of technology to magnify rehabilitative initiatives and training, as well as expanding communication

platforms such as social media and virtual platforms to ensure the American Correctional Association's message become a resounding voice to our members, the public and around the world.

Working together, we can achieve these goals and build upon ACA's 151-year legacy as a champion for corrections and correctional effectiveness.

Once again, let me thank each of you for allowing me to serve as your president. I describe the work of corrections as challenging, complex, and often misunderstood on the best days, but I also know the character and dedication of the corrections family that is more than capable of delivering the mission of corrections even in these challenging times.

Please know that I am praying for each of you and your families as we enter 2021. I am very much looking forward to seeing you all in Music City, Nashville, Tennessee in August of this year where I promise you, we will have a great time!

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you all for giving me this opportunity to serve as your President and the field of corrections.



Tony C. Parker
ACA President