

# National Correctional Appreciation: First Week of May

## Volunteer Opportunity

In 1984 President Ronald Reagan signed Proclamation 5187, creating “National Correctional Officers Week” to honor the work of the correctional officers nationwide. In 1996, Senate Resolution 242 broadened it “National Correctional Employees Week.”

Regardless of the name, many federal, state, and local agencies will mark the first week of May with ceremonies and other special events to acknowledge the work done by the men and women serving in the field of corrections, and to honor those who have given their lives in the line of duty.

As ministers who focus primarily on inmates and their families, we can easily overlook the tremendous pressure that corrections employees face on the job. They must maintain the safety of the public while also protecting the safety and rights of those in their custody. They face scrutiny from the government and the public while managing the constant potential for violence. They also make it possible and safe for churches and ministries to go behind bars and share the Gospel.

We have an opportunity each year to say thank-you to these hard-working men and women — and engage the Church at the same time.

### Ways to Say “Thanks” to COs:

Most facilities have two or three shifts of officers. Sometimes prior to the first week in May:

- Acquire permission from the wardens at your facilities to demonstrate appreciation through providing a meal for all the staff. Recruit three new churches to sponsor a meal for the entire corrections staff for each shift.
- If a meal is too much, perhaps a church or volunteers can provide bottled water, snacks, signed thank you cards, or other gestures of appreciation for staff. Use your imagination — and get permission.
- Be sure to capture the data on churches and volunteers
- Follow up with the wardens to ensure the genuine expression of appreciation was well-received by him or her - and the staff.
- Follow up with the churches to get feedback: Was this a meaningful ministry opportunity? Did any additional ministry opportunities surface during the event? How might you continue to partner in ministry?

*“Thank you!”* — two simple words wrapped in one heartfelt gesture of appreciation

