



M S C M
Montreal Southwest Community Ministries

THE SOU'WESTER

MONTREAL-SOUTHWEST COMMUNITY MINISTRIES

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It is with sadness to report that **MSCM** tragically lost one of its own:

Christopher Jost Chris' journey can be found on Page 7. His life touched many of us. We will miss him.

We encourage you to support one another so that no one, especially those most vulnerable, lacks a sense of being connected and supported within our community.

We are mindful of the shock, sadness and disorientation felt by all in our community and we hold all in our thoughts and prayers.



Rest in Peace

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INMATES HAVE RAISED \$129,000 OVER TWO YEARS FOR CHARITIES **THE UNLIKELY PHILANTHROPISTS**

More than 130 Canadian charities have benefitted from upwards of \$129,000 generated over the past two years by some of this country's most unlikely philanthropists—federal inmates, many of whom are serving life sentences for murder and have limited opportunity to earn money yet choose to give away what they have to those less fortunate.

It may come as a surprise to many Canadians just how much time, effort and expense prisoners expend throughout the year giving back to the communities they let down in one way or another.

From a \$4000 donation from inmates at Fraser Valley Institution to the Bowls of Hope Society of Chilliwack, BC, school lunch programs, to the Exceptional People's Olympiad hosted annually for the past 36 years by Collins Bay Institution in Ontario, documents obtained by Postmedia News through access to information laws show significant contributions involving both cash, goods and time.

John Chaif, an inmate at Ontario's Joyceville Institution who is serving a life sentence, helps coordinate a lot of the charity work that goes on at the medium-security prison.

Noting many people who end up behind bars were 'pulled off the streets', he said it shouldn't come as a surprise that inmates want to help the needy.

"It's an interesting illusion that people who are in prison are no longer members of society right? It's not true," he said in a telephone interview. "One of the misconceptions is that because a person does a bad thing, they're a bad person and they don't care about other people and that's just not always the case. People have compassion and look after each other even inside the walls. So of course that spreads out into the greater community as well."

According to the documents, inmates across the country have raised money for local food banks, kids sports teams, they've sponsored families for Christmas, fostered children through international aid organizations and contributed to numerous charities like the Multiple Sclerosis Society, Habitat for Humanity, the Royal Canadian Legion, the Children's Wish Foundation, the Humane Society, the Hospital for Sick Children, Doctors Without Borders, UNICEF, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind and the Boys and Girls Club.

The medium-security Leclerc Institution near

Montreal which is slated for closure, hosted disabled people on multiple occasions around Christmas and Easter to 'allow prisoners to be in contact with people who are different from themselves', according to documents detailing the initiative. The visits allowed inmates and their guests to share a meal and included the exchange of gifts as well as a donation to the organization itself.

Kim Pate, Executive Director of the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies, said she's heard of female inmates banding together to help one of their own. In one case, women pooled their funds to help a fellow inmate whose child needed a wheelchair. In another, an inmate's husband needed a motor scooter due to complications from diabetes.

Inmates are also putting their skills and talents to work for others. Through the 'Garden Project', inmates in New Brunswick "worked hard in preparing, planting, weeding, cultivating and finally harvesting our vegetable garden throughout the summer," according to a memo. The harvest yielded 2,434 kilograms of vegetables that were distributed to food banks in their community.

Source: Postmedia News

GRANTING INMATES TEMPORARY ABSENCES AND WORK RELEASES WARDENS HAVE POWER

Prison wardens can effectively thwart the will of the Parole Board of Canada—and one of them appears to have done so in the case of a woman who killed a Toronto police officer.

The sweeping powers were quietly granted to wardens last year under a little-known “Commissioner’s Directive,” which enlarged upon existing authority in the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Elaine Ross Cece is one of two women who were convicted of second-degree murder in the fall of 1999 for slaying Det. Const. William (Billy) Hancox. It was in June 2010 that Cece applied for ‘Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA)’, at the Parole Board of Canada. As a result, the Board decided Cece lacked insight into the crime and minimized the violence she had inflicted.

Coupled with her mixed response to prison programs and ‘issues with drugs and alcohol abuse’, the Board ruled she wasn’t ready.

But in December 2011, Carol-Ann Reynen, the Warden at Fraser Valley Institution for Women in BC, granted Cece the very passes the Parole Board had refused her, apparently with authority broadly granted under the CCRA, which speaks only vaguely about temporary absences.

Warden’s decisions, unlike those of the Parole Board, aren’t made in public, though the victim’s family are notified if they ask to be.

This, Jean-Paul Lorieau, a spokesman for the Pacific region of the Correctional Service of Canada, is all authorized under the Commissioner’s Directive on Temporary Absences 710-3 of June 13 last year.

The directive gives wardens the power to grant inmates temporary absences and work releases as long as they are within 3 years of full parole eligibility.

In practice, what it means is that temporary absences, originally meant to allow inmates to attend funerals or get medical treatment unavailable in prison to leave the institution for short periods of time, have become a way around the parole system itself.

And, as discretionary powers granted to wardens, they are without oversight or any meaningful review.

Conservative MP, Corneliu Chisu, has prepared a private member’s bill to change the legislation, but it has yet to be given a number.

Source: The Montreal Gazette

PAROLE BOARD DECISIONS SHOULD REIGN SUPREME TOEWS BLASTS LOOPHOLE

Parole Board decisions should reign supreme, Public Safety Minister Vic Toews said following revelations that a second-degree murderer was granted an escorted absence from prison by a warden despite a negative Parole Board decision.

“Individuals deemed ineligible for parole should not be given conditional release that is tantamount to parole through the back door,” he said in an email statement.

“I’ve asked (Correctional Service of Canada) commissioner Don Head for options to ensure that decisions of the Parole Board of Canada are given full effect, both in letter and in spirit.”

He also commended backbencher Conservative Corneliu Chisu for taking on the issue in the form of a private member’s bill aimed at closing the loophole that’s allowed wardens to make such decisions in matters involving inmates serving life

sentences without considering previous decisions of the Parole Board.

Chisu’s private member’s bill seeks to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to harmonize decisions made by the Parole Board in cases of first- or second-degree murder.

It raises questions about whether the government will take over the bill, which has yet to be introduced or simply lend its support to the legislation which would hasten the passage.

Source: The Montreal Gazette

*Canada
is a country
which
produces citizens
who will cross
the ocean
to fight
for democracy
but won't
cross the street to
vote.*

Author unknown

IN PERSON PROFILE

The Sou'Wester is pleased to introduce Maurice Bowen who has spent 24 years in prison and is currently on day parole living in a half-way house in Montreal. We are grateful that Maurice was willing to share his experiences with us.

Q. Firstly, thank you Maurice for agreeing to participate. Your home is Waswanipi in Northern Quebec. Can you tell us a little about your childhood and culture?

A. In the early part of my childhood we lived a semi-nomadic life, travelling in early spring to goose camps, summer to our fishing grounds and moose camps in the fall, mainly in tents. We travelled by boat (canoe). During late fall we were more sedentary and our residence was basically log cabins near non-native communities. We lived predominantly off the land which was rich with fresh meat, fowl and fish. In order to maintain the natural balance of the ecosystem, we moved from one area to another from the preceding year. We lived and travelled with our extended family and friends. Most days were spent listening to stories and learning the finer art of hunting and understanding the habits of animals. The framework of our culture has two basic 'commandments'—respect and share. Respect meant treating all living things with honesty and in the purpose that they were meant to be (this included self-respect). Sharing did not only include material items but feelings, hopes, joys and fears.

Later, I was taken away from my parents as part of the 60's scoop (which lasted until the 80's)—the mass removal of Aboriginal children from their families. The impact on me was traumatic, growing up in conditions of suppressed identity and abuse. The complete disregard of my identity had far-reaching consequences and contributed to the rage that I lived with for many years.

Q. You have spent many years inside. Could you tell us what you did with your time?

A. I spent as much time as I could acquiring information and knowledge, initially taking up trades (small motor repair, cabinet making, machinist) as well as upgrading my education (computer courses, French immersion and any free workshop I encountered). I went from working alone (because I didn't like people) to working with people (as ombudsman, peer helper, sports commissioner, "préposée au handicap") because I began to realize that I needed help—needed to trust people again and I was not an island, nor was I safe and secure in my isolation.

Q. How did you first become aware of **MSCM** and **Open Door**?

A. In time I began to be more sociable and meet people from the outside. Marie Beemans was one person I met in various institutions—she seemed genuine and I was enticed by her honesty

and her willingness to help others. Through her I heard about **MSCM** and later when I was in a minimum, I heard about **Open Door**.

Q. What benefits did you think you gained from our **Open Door** volunteer program?

A. **Open Door** allowed me to work on my social skills (especially communication skills) rather than just venting frustration at the system. It has helped me find solutions and alternatives.

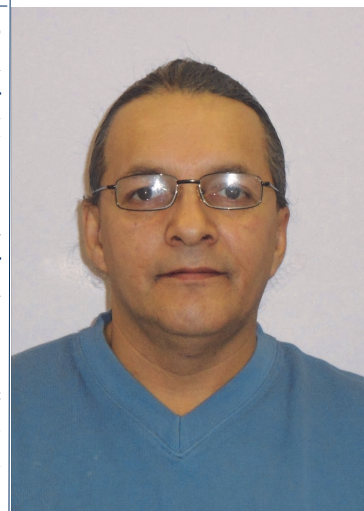
Q. You have attended **MSCM's Community Building Workshops**. Did you gain any valuable insights?

A. The Community Building Workshops allowed me to express myself openly (in secure confidentiality) without fear of rejection and/or being judged. This was a first step in understanding my behaviours, including my wariness about other people.

Since my release, I continue to use the resources offered by **MSCM** and will continue to do so, because I need caring, positive and honest people in my life.

Q. Can you tell us what your goals are now?

A. Sorry, other than school and menial work (for now), I do not have any goals per se...in the long term I would like to work in small communities or community centres developing programs...



"We Crees believe that life is like a tree, we grow depending on how secure our roots are.

If they are not deeply rooted, we will not grow or expand to our potential, we will live stunted, never seeing further than what's near to us or reaching out to others around us. We will not be chosen by other creatures for shelter (will not be able to totally connect to all creation)—they will not find strength in us and when storms arise (difficulties), we will not sway with the wind but crash and fall.

So it is important to know who you are and where you came from. Family, friends, community and culture are your roots that will help you aim higher, be stronger and let you walk with confidence into the future, no matter what storm arises.

Remember that it is never too late to strengthen your roots—this can be achieved only by going deeper into the earth (inside yourself)."

Maurice Bowen



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*"We must learn
to live together
as brothers
or perish
together as fools."*

Martin Luther King Jr.

Donations of time
and service are
also welcome.
We are especially
looking for volunteers
who would be
interested in
escorting.

Please contact our offices
by phone or email, or visit
our website:
(514)244-6147
mscm@sympatico.ca
www.mscm-qc.org

Please mail your cheques
to:

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WHO IS THIS ?

BACK THEN



*Reminiscent of the
sixties commune days*

...AND NOW



Recently leaving an Open Door meeting

Bob is currently living his dream visiting China.
You can catch up with him at the following site:

<http://robert-knight.artistwebsites.com/index.html>

PLEASE SUPPORT MSCM

MSCM is a volunteer organization welcoming ex-offenders back to the community by supporting them in their social, spiritual, social, emotional and practical needs. We foster restoration and accountability and attend to the needs of all those affected by crime.

MSCM has relied upon support from the Community Chaplaincy of Montreal (Aumônerie de Communautaire de Montréal) and individual donors like you. The stigma associated with offenders brings financial and other challenges with it. Your contribution helps.

I support **MSCM** and their programs and am enclosing a donation of:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other: _____

*Note: Cheques less than \$50 should be made payable to **MSCM**.*

Cheques greater than \$50 should be made payable to:

Anglican Diocese of Montreal, memo: MSCM.

Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$50 or greater.

Name: _____

Address: _____

E:mail: _____

TORIES TOUGHENED RULES LAST SPRING**PARDONS SOUGHT BY EX-INMATES PLUNGE**

Applications for criminal record suspensions, formerly known as pardons, have plummeted since the Conservative government finalized tough new rules last spring.

Statistics released to The Canadian Press under the federal access-to-information law show 15,871 applicants between March 2011 and December 2012 down more than 40% on an annualized basis compared to 2009-2010.

A relatively small portion of those applications—8,634— even got through the door for processing by the Parole Board of Canada. The board used to send back about 25% of applications for various reasons, but the 'error rate' in 2011 was more than 45%. The end result is a dramatic drop in the number of former inmates who are able to put their criminal past

behind them and start anew.

The Parole Board says 3,693 record suspensions were granted from March 13, 2012 —when the new rules kicked in—to December 6th. Compare that to more than 24,000 pardons granted in 2009-10, the last full year before Ottawa began changing the system.

Getting through the door is now the challenge.

One private pardon service—the equivalent of tax preparation professionals—complains the parole board has become 'almost obstructive' towards pardon applicants.

And sharply restricting the number of former offenders who are able to bury their past has ramifications: a record suspension can help the recipient get a better job or travel abroad, and is considered a powerful incentive not to reoffend.

"If you are burdened with mistakes of the past on an ongoing basis, that in itself can contribute significantly towards further problems as you go through life," Dennis Fentie, Yukon premier from 2002 to 2011, said in an interview. "It becomes a real challenge for individuals. They're shunned. Certain doors aren't open to them."

Fentie speaks from experience. In 1975 he was convicted for his involvement in a heroin trafficking ring in Edmonton and sentenced to 3 years in prison. He served 17 months before being released on parole. Two decades later he received a pardon. "In my case, I went from the penitentiary to the premier's office," said Fentie, who rose to power as leader of the conservative Yukon Party.

"And the reason I got there was because I was able to achieve that full pardon and have a clean slate in my life."

Source: The Canadian Press

*Hope
is like a bird
that
senses the dawn
and
carefully
starts to sing
while it is still
dark.*

Anonymous

CHANGES TO PARDON RULES LEADS MANY TO SEEK OTHER AVENUES**INMATES SEEK "MERCY" PLEAS**

New restrictions on the granting of criminal record suspensions, or pardons, are causing more former convicts to seek clemency under the rarely used Royal Prerogative of Mercy, according to the Parole Board of Canada.

In fact, the federal agency has posted an "Important Notice" on its website to discourage clemency applications, which it notes are 'only granted in exceptional circumstances.'

"If you are ineligible for a record suspension, or the board has refused to order a suspension in your case, it is highly unlikely that you will qualify

under RPM," cautions the Board.

There are currently 79 active clemency applications in the pipeline, according to the Board's spokeswoman Caroline Douglas. That's up from 58 in the system last March. The annual report noted it typically handles about 20 applications a year.

An omnibus crime bill passed last spring (Bill C-10) put pardons out of reach for many former offenders, including prohibiting applications by those convicted of child-sex offences and by anyone with more than three convictions for indictable offences.

The new law also doubled the crime-free waiting period before an offender can apply to 10 years for indictable convictions and five years for less serious summary of offences.

At the same time, Ottawa enacted new regulations that quadrupled the application fee for a pardon—now officially called a record suspension—to \$631. The Parole Board makes a direct link between the new restrictions and the flood of mercy pleas.

In addition to the backlog of clemency files, it noted the unit was 'dealing with an increase in inquiries as a result of the new legislation.'

Source: The Canadian Press



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*"How few
there are
who have
courage enough
to own their faults,
or
resolution enough
to mend them!"*

Benjamin Franklin

FIGHTS TO FINISH 149-YEAR SENTENCE IN CANADA MÉTIS MAN IN U.S. PRISON

A Métis man taken from his family as a child and adopted by American parents has gone to court to force Public Safety Minister, Vic Toews to let him serve the rest of a 149-year sentence in Canada.

A lawyer acting for Scott Myers filed the legal challenge in Ottawa seeking a court order to overturn Toews' refusal to approve a transfer to a prison in his country of birth.

Myers, 39, has served 17 years of his sentence for armed robbery and attempted second-degree murder in U.S. prisons. He is currently serving his sentence—the equivalent of two full lifetimes—in the Louisiana State Penitentiary.

He was born to Métis parents in Manitoba. When he was a small child, he and 6 siblings were taken from their home by the provincial child and family services amid allegations that their parents were drinking. He was later adopted by a couple in New Orleans, as part of the so-called "Sixties Scoop," the

Canadian program of forced assimilation of aboriginal children with white families that ran from the 1960s into the late 1980s.

The adoption by a white couple, says his Ottawa lawyer Yavar Hameed, could have been a factor in the troubled life that ended with Meyer's conviction in 1994. "He was kind of a dislocated youth," Hameed said. The same year as the crime, the 20 year old Meyers had just found out about his birth family back in Manitoba and initiated contact.

In late December, Meyers learned that his application had been rejected. According to the statement filed in Federal Court, Toews had denied the request on the premise that Meyers had abandoned Canada as his place of residence. Hameed wrote that it was 'an abomination' for Toews to claim that Meyers abandoned Canada.

"The Minister knew that the applicant's uprooting from his place of birth was done without his consent and that the Crown was directly responsible for the

separation of his cultural heritage and the removal of the applicant from Canada."

"Toews also failed to weigh these factors against the potential for rehabilitation, as the law requires," Hameed argued.

Hameed accuses Toews of "perverse approach" to transfer requests and notes the "staggering number of denials of transfer requests" by the Conservative government, compared to the Liberals, who approved all requests.

"The Conservatives' tough-on-crime approach show a 'punitive inclination' closed mindedness and failure to consider the rehabilitative potential of the offender," he writes.

In several cases over the past 3 years, Federal Court judges have set aside decisions by Toews or his predecessors on inmate transfer cases, prompting appeals by the government.

"For privacy reasons, we cannot comment on specific cases," Toews' director of communications, Julie Carmichael, wrote in an email. "However, public safety is always our No. 1 concern."

Source: Postmedia News

NOVA SCOTIA

DOG-INMATE PROGRAM GETS RUFF RIDE

A pilot program that pairs inmates with canines in Nova Scotia has the Conservative Party barking over the cost.

NS Tory justice critic Allan MacMaster said he doesn't understand why the province is spending \$26,000 on the program.

"It is insensitive for a

government to go out and spend this kind of money on a program for people who are incarcerated when there are so many other people out there suffering because of the economy," McMaster said.

WOOF, an acronym for Working on our Future, was launched in December at the Central Nova Scotia

Correctional Facility in partnership with the SPCA and will run until the end of March.

Justice Minister Ross Landry said inmates will care for and train 5 undisciplined dogs before they are returned to the SPCA and adopted.

The idea is to rehabilitate the dog and the inmate.

Source: The Canadian Press

IN MEMORIAM : CHRISTOPHER JOST

Christopher Jost was a valued member of **MSCM** for many years. He was a core member of a Circle of Support and Accountability (**CoSA**) for some 7 years and in that time although his liberty was suspended on a few occasions for breaches of conditions, he did not re-offend until the last tragic occasion that led to his arrest, incarceration and ultimate death.

The tragedy of Chris' life and death has deeply affected many in the community, including in **MSCM** and at St. James the Apostle Church—both the congregation and the other tenants of the Church. Chris Jost was an offender supervised in the community by the Correctional Service of Canada because of the seriousness of his crimes. He was also a generous, hospitable person who loved nothing more than to reach out to people and to share his thoughts and possessions and to live his daily life in the company of others.

Apart from his **CoSA**, his involvement in **MSCM** included the set-up and arrangements for our Community Building Workshops, Christmas Dinners, and Movie Nights, as well as for his role in our film "**One of Us**".

We will never know what caused Chris to do what he did on 5 January 2013 which caused so much harm and hurt to so many people. His death too caused hurt, yet leaves us hoping that his suffering, both physical and emotional, has come to an end. We will continue to do our work at **MSCM** trusting that during those 7 years our journeying with Chris was as beneficial for him and for the larger community as we know it was for us.

**A MESSAGE FROM GEORGE CARLIN**

The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more, but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.

We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much, and pray too seldom.

We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.

We've learned how to make a living, but not a life. We've added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor.

We conquered outer space

but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things. We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice.

We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.

These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships.

These are days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses, but broken homes.

These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose to either share this insight or delete it.

Remember, spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.

Remember, say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.

Remember to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.

Remember to say, 'I love you' to your partner and loved ones, but most of all mean it. A kiss and an embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.

Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again. Give time to love, give time to speak! And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.

And Always Remember:
Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.



George Carlin



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YOUR WORTH

Your worth is not a product of your intelligence, your talent, your looks, or how much you have accomplished.

Though much of who and what we are changes as we journey through life, our inherent worth remains constant. While the term self-worth is often used interchangeably with self-esteem, the two qualities are inherently different. Self-esteem is the measure of how you feel about yourself at a given moment in time. Your worth, however, is immeasurable and unchanging manifestation of your eternal and infinite oneness with the universe. It represents the cornerstone of the dual foundations of optimism and self-belief. Your worth cannot be taken from you or damaged by life's rigors, yet it can easily be forgotten or even actively ignored. By regularly acknowledging your self-worth, you can ensure that you never forget what an important, beloved and special part of the universe you are.

You are born worthy—your worth is intertwined with your very being. Your concept of your own self-worth is thus reinforced by your actions. Each time you endeavour to appreciate yourself, treat yourself kindly, define your personal boundaries, be proactive in seeing that your needs are met, and broaden your horizons, you express your recognition of your innate value. During those periods when you have lost sight of your worth, you will likely feel mired in depression, insecurity and a lack of confidence. You'll pursue a counterfeit worth based on judgment rather than the beauty that resides within. When you feel worthy, however, you will accept yourself without hesitation. It is your worth as an individual who is simultaneously interconnected with all living beings that allows you to be happy, confident and motivated. Because your conception of your worth is not based on the fulfillment of expectations, you'll see your mistakes and failures as just another part of life's journey.

Human beings are very much like drops of water in an endless ocean. Our worth comes from our role as distinct individuals as well as our role as an integral part of something larger than ourselves. Simply awakening to this concept can help you rediscover the copious and awe-inspiring worth within each and every one of us.

*Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass...
it's learning how to dance in the rain!
We cannot direct the wind,
but we can adjust our sails.*

THE LAST LAUGH

- ♦ A bus station is where a bus stops. A train station is where a train stops. On my desk, I have a work station....
- ♦ To err is human, to blame it on somebody else shows management potential.
- ♦ A television can insult your intelligence, but nothing rubs it in like a computer.
- ♦ Worrying works! 90% of the things I worry about never happen.
- ♦ Procrastination—never put off until tomorrow what you can do the day after tomorrow!
- ♦ The winner of the rat race, is still a rat.