

Yakima County Department of Corrections
DOC Recognizes Program Volunteer

For Immediate Release – November 26, 2008

Contact: Director Steve Robertson
 Public Information Officer Gina Danielson

[Yakima, Washington] – On November 24, 2008, Director Steve Robertson honored Tony Kahclamat, a longtime program volunteer, with a Certificate of Appreciation for his continued dedication in bringing the hope of recovery to inmates in our facilities.

Tony was eight years old when he took his first drink of alcohol. Thus he started a lifetime of substance abuse and subsequently his journey through a system of foster homes, mental health wards, juvenile detention, county jails, and ultimately prison. Tony started up the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) Program at the Yakima County Department of Corrections in 1993. Although he found it difficult to return to a correctional setting as a volunteer, he strived to help others succeed in their road to recovery. It wasn't easy at first, but he remained committed to helping others.

Since approximately 2001, Tony has been the AA Corrections Committee Liaison in Yakima. A group of AA members have formed a Committee and part of Tony's responsibilities were to be the point of contact in taking information into the local jails, and reporting back to the committee. Tony and the Programs Coordinator at the Yakima County Jail, Terri Beernink, have worked closely to establish almost twenty AA volunteers.

For 15 years he has been a volunteer for not only Yakima County Department of Corrections, but many other local jails and correctional facilities. Tony candidly admits there have been days when he has wanted to quit, but it was his commitment not only to his own sobriety, but helping others in their struggle with addiction that has pushed him.

The AA program for corrections first started in Walla Walla State Penitentiary in the early 1940s. In all of Tony's years as an inmate, he never had the opportunity to attend an AA support group. When he left jail for the last time, he had a driver's license that had been revoked, no education, and no hope. Today, he has all of his rights returned to him by the governor, a Class A CDL driver's license, and an education.

Tony Kahclamat realized he could help people more by being a sponsor and by taking AA to the area jails. The Restitution Center was the first facility where Tony really saw the great things that Corrections could do for inmates. He said that he had never witnessed so many programs and he was also impressed by the living conditions.

On September 10, 2001 Tony met his wife, Ruby, at an AA meeting at the Restitution Center. She was a volunteer holding a group of female inmates and he was there for male inmates. They have never

News Release From the Office of the Director

111 N. Front Street Yakima, WA 98901

Voice: (509) 574-1939, Cell: (509) 388-8710 Public Information Officer

Website Address: www.co.yakima.wa.us/doc

been apart since and married on September 10, 2007. Both Tony and Ruby agree that “sobriety is good and AA saves lives.”

Yakima County Department of Corrections has been honored to have Tony Kahclamat’s time and effort here and we cannot thank them enough.



(Left to right): Director Steve Robertson, Volunteer Tony Kahclamat, and Program Coordinator Officer Terri Beernink