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3/18/14

To: Deputy Supt. David Zetwo, facility management  
From: Gregg Edward Siddons - CK-2819

To: All Staff and Correctional officers of S.C.I. Albion. On March 24th, 2013 a fellow inmate and who was my best friend, Steve Nicklas passed away from Colon Cancer. After his death and to honor his memory, I founded a program that would help any inmate who is suffering from a terminal illness, a Palliative Care unit set up here at S.C.I. Albion. The whole purpose of this program is to help anyone who has a terminal illness to find the strength to live as fully as possible within the confine of the illness.

One of my goals is to encourage each inmate who is dying of a terminal illness to live each day remaining to them as fully as possible, to move beyond pain, confusion, or despair toward a perception of their lives as a whole, and to make peace with the approaching end. I would like to thank the following D.O.C. Staff. Mrs. Christine Zibkle, Hospital Administrator, R.N., Mrs. Tammy Bansom, Correctional Officer Hoover, Mrs. Eddy, Psychologist and most of all Nurse Jessica Owen, R.N. for all their help and advice in helping me get this program off the ground.

Caring for a dying inmate involves a lot of love and compassion. Sometimes encouraging them to release fears and angers. Sometimes providing just a calm comforting presence; or honest answers

to difficult questions. You will learn how precious the final days of persons life can be and how deeply moving it can be to share these moments with someone. Even more, we come to realize just how much about living there is to learn from those who are dying. In an age when we are taught not to talk about death, this message I've been writing in my letters to staff over the past 12-months is to give strength to talk about it, give us hope, and celebrate the amazing courage of the human spirit.

I hope to be able to open up peoples minds to the rich rewards that come from being there to share the last living moments of someone close to them. I have made my own discovery of these rewards and it has transformed my life. No matter what we often believe, dying is not an encounter with nothingness, devoid of all meaning, without detracting from the pain of this journey through mourning and Renunciation. I would like to show how the last interval before death can also be the culmination of the shaping of a human being, even as it transform everyone else involved.

There is still time for many things to live themselves out, on a different plane, more interior and more subtle, the plane of human relations

Even when one enters final helplessness, one can still feel love and give love, and many of the dying, in their last moments, send back a poignant message to all of us. don't pass by life. don't pass by love. The end of the life of someone you love can allow you to accompany that person to the very last step. How many of us grasp this opportunity? Instead of looking on coming death squarely in the face, we behave as if it will never come. we lie to one another. we lie to ourselves and instead of giving voice to the essential, instead of exchanging words of love, or gratitude, or forgiveness, instead of leaning on one another for support in the extraordinary crossing that is death of someone we love, pooling all the wisdom, the humor, and the love of which we're capable for the moment of actual encounter, we allow this final, essential, unique moment of life to be missed in silence and solitude.

In all the letters I've written, I've tried to open everyone's eyes and hearts and the love and compassion that needs to be shown to a human being who is about ready to leave this life and meet those who have passed on before him or her.

May God Bless you all

c.c. self

Gregg Siddons  
CK-2819