

Rudolph Small

Counselor Jumps in To Stop a Courtroom Attack

By Glenda Beal

Rudy Small proved himself a hero to fellow staff members at the Augusta State Medical Prison on March 16, 2006, when he single-handedly rescued them from the attack of a mentally ill inmate.

According to Warden Victor Walker, "Small prevented further, more serious injury and quite possibly saved the lives of several fellow staff members." Small subdued a mentally ill inmate who became violent during a disciplinary hearing as sanctions against him were read. The inmate threw a two-way radio at two staff and attacked the hearing officer, who endured minor injuries, as did Small.

Small, who often participates in disciplinary hearings as a member of the disciplinary advocate staff, was not on duty as an advocate on the day of the incident. He was wrapping up his work in an adjacent room and preparing to leave for the day when he reacted immediately to sounds of an altercation. His quick response had the inmate under control before the arrival of reinforcements. When asked about his usual contact with mentally ill inmates at the hospital, Small explained, "Even though we have another person there [at the disciplinary hearings] with us who is a mental health specialist, we still pretty much have contact at that time with the mental health inmates more so than at any other time."

A counselor with 27 years of experience at the Georgia Department of Corrections, Small credits his corrections and military training for his quick reaction to the emergency. In addition to his experience as a correctional officer and probation officer, he served 11 years as a platoon leader in an engineering unit of the Georgia National Guard.

Augusta State Medical Prison, opened in 1983, is a maximum-security facility in Grovetown, Ga., (15 miles

from Augusta) that houses more than 1,100 male inmates, 200 of whom are considered mental health inmates. The institution serves as an emergency receiving facility for inmates suffering both medical and psychiatric illnesses who cannot be handled at other correctional facilities in Augusta and nearby counties. It also serves as a public hospital for inmates and provides specialized medical services and mental health services for male and female inmates on an outpatient basis. Small says the hospital section is separate from the general population and that the facility is not much different from other prisons, except that its infirmary capacity is much larger and has a surgical unit, as well as access to nearby hospitals.

Small began his career with the State of Georgia as a youth development worker when he graduated from Albany State College in 1979. Three years later, he moved to the medical prison as a correctional officer, where he worked for more than two years before joining community corrections as a probation officer. He returned to the medical prison in 1990 as a counselor. "He has proven himself to be a loyal and strong team member of the Augusta State Medical Prison staff," Walker said.

Walker has also nominated Small for the Bobby Franklin Award for Heroism for his response in the disciplinary hearing incident. One of the governor's annual public safety awards, it was named for a Georgia DOC correctional officer killed in 2003 while on extended duty in Iraq. He was serving as staff sergeant with a North Carolina National Guard military police unit.

Away from work, Small has devoted much of his time to community activities. Small is a licensed minister and has served as youth minister at his church for about four years. In addition, he spent years as a member

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of the Amateur Athletic Union, coaching youths in baseball, softball, football and basketball. He still occasionally officiates games.

Small has always been active in athletics. In high school, he was on the track team and played football. He was selected team captain and most valued player of his football team for the 1973-1974 season, and he went on to play a year of college football at Albany State University.

Small and his wife, Venice, have two children, for whom he enjoys serving as personal coach. His 16-year-old daughter Kaylyn plays basketball in high school, and his son Nicholas, 20, runs track at college.

Glenda Beal is a contributing editor for Corrections Today.