



County of Santa Cruz

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PRESS RELEASE

Custody Alternatives Program Receives Award from California State Association of Counties

Date: September 13, 2013
Release: Immediately
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A pioneering Santa Cruz County program to offer several alternatives to incarceration for qualified individuals is being honored as one of the most innovated county programs in the state by the California State Association of Counties (CSAC).

CSAC chose the Custody Alternative Program (CAP) as only one of a handful statewide to receive a coveted 2013 CSAC Challenge Merit Award. Created in the early 1990s, the Challenge Awards annually recognize innovation in county government.

“The CSAC Challenge Awards program exemplifies the very best of county government,” said CSAC President David Finigan. “The programs highlighted each year demonstrate how California’s 58 counties are striving to continuously serve their constituents more efficiently and cost-effectively. The Santa Cruz County Custody Alternative Program embodies what the Challenge Awards are all about.”

“The CAP program was implemented to address the redistribution of offenders in State prison to their local jurisdiction while still maintaining high standards of public safety,” said Sheriff Phil Wowak. “We are very pleased to be honored by CSAC.”

CAP allows individuals meeting certain criteria to serve their sentence through the performance of community based service work assignments. Within the work-release program the Sheriff’s Office assigns convicted, low level offenders to specific worksites throughout the County of Santa Cruz to satisfy their obligation to the County of Santa Cruz and the justice system by performing light labor in the service of society.

Additionally, CAP permits some individuals to serve their sentence under ‘house arrest’ conditions at their place of residence under electronic monitoring. The Electronic Monitoring Program is designed for offenders who pose a minimal risk to the

community, yet whose behavior and offense indicate a need for close supervision. The program can be used for offenders who have special needs or problems that may be better handled in their home environment. The offender's movements will be restricted and they will be required to wear a tamper-resistant, non-removable anklet. The offender is provided with a schedule that will allow them to leave their residence for employment, school, treatment programs, counseling and other activities approved by the Sheriff's Office program staff. Restricted areas can be established in cases where victims are involved. Progress and compliance with conditions of release are continually evaluated and monitored by Sheriff's Office staff assigned to the program.

"Our Sheriff's effective Corrections Alternative Program has resulted in the safe management of the jail population. Consequently there is room in our jail for dangerous and high risk offenders. This is both good public safety and good stewardship over the public dollar. I am certain that this award will draw attention, and other counties will follow our lead," stated Scott MacDonald, Chief Probation Officer.

This year, CSAC is honoring 12 county programs with Challenge Awards and another 22 programs with Merit Awards. Overall, a judging panel reviewed more than 200 programs submitted by California's counties.

Susan Mauriello, Santa Cruz County Administrator, said, "The Custody Alternative Program has been extremely valuable to the County in meeting its obligations under criminal justice realignment while continuing to maintain effective cost controls. This program is a true partnership of the agencies within the criminal justice system and I am so pleased that the CSAC has acknowledged this fine work."

Founded in 1895, the California State Association of Counties is the voice of California counties at the state and federal level.

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