

Montesano DOC Officers Likely Saved Offender's Life

Local News

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MONTESANO, Wash. - Community corrections officers at the Montesano field office likely saved the life of an offender who was found severely dehydrated, malnourished and depressed in her Westport home Nov. 29. Community Corrections Officer Josh Burgess went to the offender's home after she failed to report to the field office and would not respond to phone calls. When he arrived at the home the door was unlocked, the lights were off and it was about 40 degrees inside. The offender, Tanya Adams, 57, was on the couch and barely able to respond. "I told her that I was either going to take her to the Crisis Clinic for treatment or to the jail where she could get what she needed there," Burgess said. "Either way, I was not going to let her remain in that condition and in the environment because she wasn't going to last much longer." Burgess and his partner, Randall Tremain, took Adams to Grays Harbor Community Hospital for an evaluation. The medical staff treated her for severe dehydration, providing her with 3 liters of intravenous fluids. Both community corrections officers remained with Adams for more than 12 hours until a mental health professional arrived at 2:45 a.m. to place her on a hold, not allowing her to leave the hospital until she was treated. Burgess and Tremain left the hospital at about 3:30 a.m.

"That wasn't on my Outlook calendar," Burgess said with a laugh. "But it's part of the job." The community corrections officers typically stay with offenders at the hospital until they can be sure the offender can't leave. While there's a public safety component, officers say there's also the human component. "Particularly when you have a severely depressed offender with mental health problems, you want to make sure they're taken care of," Burgess said. "Sometimes community supervision means issuing arrest warrants, and other times it means connecting offenders with mental health professionals. It requires a lot of different skills." Burgess joined the Department of Corrections in December 2006 after working five years at the Grays Harbor County Jail. He describes his time as a community corrections officer as an "eye-opener." "When I worked at the jail and I saw an offender arrive I thought of it as 'Welcome to my home,'" Burgess said. "But now that I'm in community corrections and I go to their homes, I can better see how they end up in jail. You start seeing the bigger picture, what causes that to happen." Preventing offenders from ending up in jail, in part by connecting them to critical services, is the part of the job that Burgess enjoys the most. "Knowing that we sometimes save people's lives makes this job special," he

said.