

Federal Glover: A handshake is better than a kick in the pants

By Federal Glover For the Contra Costa Times Contra Costa Times

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Everyone has a different style of leadership. There are those in leadership positions who like to use their authority to bulldoze their way to solutions and those who prefer to build consensus before arriving at a solution.

I lean toward the latter style. Sometimes, though, I've learned that occasionally, people need a good kick in the pants.

But if a good relationship has been nurtured, that kick in the pants is often unnecessary.

A good example of relationship-building is the grant that Contra Costa County recently received from the federal Department of Justice to help in our efforts to reduce the impact of state inmates being returned to the county's supervision.

I find that the time spent developing good, respectful relationships with people is still the best way to get things done for the benefit of all. And nothing enhances a relationship more than face-to-face meetings with the people with whom you want to work.

Admittedly, it takes time, and the process may try one's patience, but in the long run, establishing and nurturing these relationships are worth it.

I'm pleased that Contra Costa County's efforts to help inmates reintegrate into our communities is being recognized and supported by the federal government through the Department of Justice's Second Chance Grant. The \$750,000 is the largest amount allowed.

But, before receiving the award, a relationship had to be established.

Through my work with the justice committees of two important organizations, the county Supervisors Association of California (CSAC) and with the National Counties Organization (NaCO), I was able to establish contacts and secure meetings with Department of Justice officials.

In my Washington meetings with those DOJ officials earlier this year, they encouraged me to continue pushing for the Second Chance Grant even though an earlier effort failed to meet their requirements. I brought that message back to county staff, and they began the arduous process of applying for the grant by bringing all the county agencies, state and local offices and nonprofits to the table.

By combining our information and sharing our expertise, we were able to meet the stringent requirements and tight deadlines for this grant.

By having these meetings, establishing my credentials and bringing to their attention what the county faces with realignment, I was no longer just another faceless bureaucrat seeking a handout. We shared time together and found common ground. We shook hands.

As a result, on Aug. 28 I was informed by U.S. Sen. Barbara Boxer's office that the county was successful in winning the grant. The grant will allow the county to develop a pilot program to deal with the realignment

initiative under AB109 that returns state prisoners and keeps low-level offenders under the county's supervision. The money will be used for a pilot project, collecting and evaluating data showing the effectiveness of the county's efforts.

Establishing a relationship between DOJ officials and the county was essential. The DOJ officials told me that they wanted to work with a California county because they knew about the historic shift in how the state is dealing with incarceration.

It takes a real coordinated effort at all levels of government -- from the county, cities, state and federal representatives in partnership with a host of community-based organizations -- to bring about this acknowledgment of the county's efforts to address our realignment needs.

I want to express my deep appreciation to everyone involved, especially Sen. Boxer, with whom I worked for many years on a variety of issues. She supported the county's effort and monitored our application through the DOJ. Other elected officials at state and federal levels joined in also.

The county plan provides for a network of resources for the formerly incarcerated so they can have a path out of the cycle of prison and recidivism. This will include education, job training, helping them find employment and housing, reuniting them with their families, treatment for their mental health and drug counseling.

The Second Chance Grant is in addition to the \$19 million the county is receiving from the state to implement Contra Costa's realignment plan.

Through this grant and the funds from the state, Contra Costa's realignment planning, which is already under way, will help produce the data and results that we all want for a safer community by developing a process and services so that returning inmates can receive the help they need to reintegrate back into their communities.

Building relationships is not always the easiest path, but for me, it is the way I prefer to get things done. A smile and handshake can do wonders.

Glover represents District 5 on the Contra Costa Board of Supervisors.