Federal Judicial Center
Off Paper Podcast Episode 6 Final

Mark Sherman: From the FJC in Washington, D.C., I'm Mark Sherman and this is *Off Paper*. For the past 18 years, Doug Burris has served as chief United States probation officer for the United States District Court in the Eastern District of Missouri. It's safe to say that during that time, he has been one of the most innovative leaders not just in the federal probation and pretrial services system, but in the federal criminal justice system writ large. His work in particular on issues of living wage employment for returning citizens has enabled the Eastern District of Missouri - which includes the City of St. Louis and the entire eastern portion of the state - to achieve remarkable outcomes for individuals on supervised release.

Doug is the first federal chief probation officer to have hired a returning citizen to work in the probation office as a community resource specialist. He's also the first and only federal chief to be a member of Harvard Kennedy School's Executive Session on Community Corrections. Doug's extraordinary leadership has been recognized by the White House, the Department of Justice, the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, and many other federal, state, local governmental and nongovernmental organizations. This year, Doug will be

retiring. So before he rides off into the sunset, I wanted to take this opportunity to pick his brain about innovation and leadership in the criminal justice system. We've got Doug Burris in the house today folks and the suspense is killing me, so let's get to it.

Doug, it's great to have you on the program.

Doug Burris: Thank you, Mark. I must start off by saying two things. One is working with the FJC has been one of the career highlights for me. The outstanding people that work for the greater good here, it's just amazing. The other thing, I really appreciate the fact that you contacted my mother and had her write the opening script for you.

Mark Sherman: Thank you, Doug, and the check is in the mail. You and I have known each other for a long time. So full disclosure to the audience, I am not objective when it comes to your work. I've sort of had a front row seat for your entire tenure as chief, and I've really learned a lot by watching you in action. To help me prepare for this episode, you were kind enough to send me some ideas about the things you think are important for us to discuss. And you sent them in the form of questions that I might ask you.

The first question and I think it is so interesting that this is actually the first question in the list that you sent me

is what fears do you have for our criminal justice system? So, let's start with that, Doug. What fears do you have?

Doug Burris: Unfortunately, I have several. The first is the way we continue to measure failure or what we count as failure in our system. The states and the federal system often use re-arrest rates to determine if someone is successful on supervision or not, not reconviction rates but re-arrest rates. And in my state, Missouri, and I'm sure most other states, there are communities where if you're a person of color you're much more likely to be stopped and arrested frankly than you are if you're a white person like me. I'll give you one great example.

One of our best successes was a man who had been to prison actually six times and when he came out we got him a job with a utility company. He restored his family. His daughter's actually in law school now. He's doing everything right. He has worked at the same job for the last 15 years. One day, he was driving through one of these communities and was pulled over. He asked the police officer, "Why did you stop me?" And he said, "Because you were speeding." And his response was, "No, I wasn't. I'm driving my company utility truck. Let me show you the GPS to show you that I was actually going 5 miles under the speed limit."

He ended up in handcuffs on the sidewalk and the officer did a search of the utility truck where he found a knife, a

putty knife, in the toolbox in the truck and he arrested him for possession of a dangerous weapon. He booked out, the charges were never formally filed but on paper that man is a failure when he is one of the greatest successes of our community that we're extremely proud. I think we need to get way past this judging success based on re-arrest.

And there are people that stumble that may get a DUI or something like that. But if they're not harming the community, if they're not doing anything, if they're not dealing kilos and they're coming home from a celebration at work or something like that, I don't think that's a failure either. So I think we've got to be much more open as to what we judge success as.

The second thing would be, I think from time to time our system has what's called a flavor of the year product where we really get excited about one thing. It becomes everything and that's what we concentrate on. I think that perhaps we're getting a little too excited about an in-depth cognitive skills program at the expense of other things that have proven to work. They're just standard drug treatments, employment, many, many other things, just simple basic assistance. This really scares me that we continue to fall into that trap.

And then the final one is the funding for the halfway houses. The statistics show that people are significantly more successful when they transition through a halfway house having

been released from prison. It gives them the support and the opportunity to adapt to the community without just being dropped on the streets. The Bureau of Prisons is closing halfway houses across the country. That's going to result in more reincarceration. There's no way around it.

Mark Sherman: So those are three very meaty issues. Now, you are the chief of the district that includes Ferguson, Missouri. I know from conversations that you and I have had over the past couple of years that that is also an issue or a situation which has really raised this issue of how we measure recidivism using re-arrest rates versus reconviction rates. In large part, your concern is that the sort of the disparate impact of using re-arrest versus reconviction or perhaps other more accurate types of measures. So can you elaborate more about that?

Doug Burris: Yes. And I have to say with Ferguson, when that happened, I wasn't surprised. I didn't think, well, why did this happen? My honest response was what took so long? Because I had seen so many of these communities that target the poor and the minorities, it was shocking to me that frankly that it took so long.

They set-up a system in Ferguson and not just Ferguson but many surrounding communities. I'm sure, again, it's like this in different parts of the country where they fund the entire

government based on targeting people that don't have the money to pay fines. And what it does is it just sets up failure for their entire community.

Mark Sherman: As you're talking, one of the things that occurs to me with all three of these fears that you've articulated, and again, this is something that we've talked about is that in some ways they represent perhaps a disconnection between what practitioners like yourself see at the ground level working in the district on a day-to-day basis with your team of officers and staff and other stakeholders in the community and policies that are made up in here sort of in Washington or procedures and policies that are developed sort of at the 40,000-foot level where everybody is working with the best of intentions. But what you're seeing and what perhaps your colleagues at the ground level are seeing is something different than what we're seeing perhaps here at the 40,000-foot level. Would you agree with that? Would you disagree with that? What are your thoughts?

Doug Burris: I totally agree with that, Mark. I think that's a great observation. I have to start out here by saying that I believe in punishment in the right circumstances. In fact, it was my fourth month on the job where I started in Oklahoma when the Murrah Building blew up. I walked around the Murrah Building and I saw the devastation that it caused.

Mark Sherman: This is the Oklahoma City bombing you're referring to.

Doug Burris: Yes. I have seen evil unlike most people and it still affects me today. I have seen people that have done horrendous things that need to go away to prison forever and I have not lost sleep over that being a part of it. But when we're punishing people for money just to try to take their money that they don't have, this is just a horrendous thing that does no good for anybody.

Mark Sherman: If you do agree with this disconnect between sort of the Washington policymaking and regulatory community and sort of the ground level law enforcement, probation and pretrial community, and relevant stakeholders in your district and in other districts, what would you recommend that can be done to sort of perhaps narrow that disconnection or eliminate that disconnection? What can we do in Washington to bring us perhaps a little bit closer to a better understanding of what happens at the district level?

Doug Burris: I don't know if it could happen. But my dream answer would be include people who are being affected by the decisions in making the decisions. And they can help steer you. They want better communities. They want better lives for their children. We all want the same thing. But when they're not included in making those decisions that affect them, they

are going to not want to participate in the community. That's where we have people that start dealing drugs and doing other things. We have to be more inclusionary and including the people that will be impacted by decisions made by policymakers.

Mark Sherman: Chief U.S. Probation Officer, Doug Burris, from the Eastern District of Missouri is my guest. We'll be back in a moment to talk about the challenges of being an innovator as well as innovations occurring in the criminal justice system that Doug thinks warrant close observation. So don't go anywhere because we're just getting warmed up. This is *Off Paper*.

Female Voice: Excellence. What does it mean for a probation officer and a pretrial services officer? It's just a word really, but we put it on a pedestal. When we do that, excellence seems out of reach, something that only the privileged few, that only the golden boys and girls can achieve, while the rest of us just stand by watching. But that's not right, it can't be. For all it takes to be an excellent officer is to be a competent officer. And all it takes to be a competent officer is knowing how to make decisions confidently, knowing how to analyze facts, policies, laws and situations critically. Knowing how to get up every morning ready to just lead from where you are and make a difference.

You don’t need a fancy title. All it takes is knowing how to investigate matters objectively and how to plan proactively. All it takes is knowing how to bounce back from a really bad moment and be resilient, and knowing how to be aware of your role as an officer. All it takes to be a competent officer is to supervise individuals in ways that will help them succeed. All it takes is to be a team player and to manage your work. That’s it. We are all capable of achieving excellence - all of us.

Male Voice: Learn more about the federal probation and pretrial systems charter for excellence and the FJC’s competencies for experienced U.S. probation and pretrial services officers at fjc.dcn.

Mark Sherman: Welcome back. I’m talking with Doug Burris, Chief, United States Probation Officer for the Eastern District of Missouri.

Doug, so let’s talk about innovation in criminal justice since that’s one of your favorite topics and one of my favorite topics too. You’ve been at the forefront for many years now. And I think one of the things for listeners to keep in mind is that it takes a fair amount of courage to innovate because innovation means risking failure. It also means disrupting the status quo which can result in conflict with folks who like things just the way they are, thank you very much. Can you talk

about what that's been like for you? Perhaps especially when you were in your first few years as chief, maybe provide an example and what you've learned?

Doug Burris: Well, at times people that have loved the system because we were doing what we always have, they thought that I had lost my mind with some of the decisions that I made. That is one of the more exciting things I can tell you that I see for our system is there is some innovation going on. And what I think is beautiful is that it is by both parties. Right on Crime I think is a wonderful organization that has really done some remarkable things with various state legislators and producing outstanding results.

Mark Sherman: And this is a coalition of conservative policymakers and legislators, both state and federal who have come together on criminal justice reform.

Doug Burris: Right. And again, producing amazing results. It's really exciting to see organizations like that really lead the way for us. The other thing I would have to say with innovation is that I've been thrilled with has been the outcomes of the Second Chance Act. I can just share some personal examples.

Before we had the Second Chance Act, we did not have the ability to fund for bus passes, job training, anything along those lines. But if someone didn't have a job and didn't report

[sounds like], we had funding for guns, vests and government vehicles to go arrest them for not working and not reporting. But now we have funding for appropriate use of people that are ready to change and take advantage of hope and help.

Here's how innovative it could get. We had a man who was released from prison after he'd served ten years. But he developed sleep apnea while he was in prison and he couldn't pass a physical. Previously, he had a commercial driver's license and drove a truck for a Fortune 500 company. They were going to hire him back, but he couldn't pass the physical. We, through Second Chance funding, we were able to get him a CPAP machine which totally fixed his sleep issue. And this man has a great career and is taking care of his family. I wish he was my next door neighbor. He's what we should all strive to see when people get released from prison.

But when you go back to the old days where we didn't have money for bus passes or anything like that, we had to hold bake sales in the federal courthouse to try to fund programs to do innovative things and produce some amazing results. But the Second Chance Act is the most exciting piece of legislation I have ever seen during my career.

Mark Sherman: All right. So let me take you back to the days of yore before the Second Chance Act. You were a relatively young man coming into the Eastern District of

Missouri as chief after working for just a few years as an officer in another district. You're coming in, you have all these great ideas about the things that you want to do, all of these innovations that you want to implement. And you did not have the policy support that you have now via the Second Chance Act, and that other chiefs have now via the Second Chance Act and other judiciary policies and that kind of thing.

So when you think back to those early days of when you were chief and the innovations, whether it was an internal innovation within your probation department or what I would refer to as an external innovation, meaning designed to help the individuals either on supervised release or on probation, what are one or two of the things that really stick in your mind as things that were difficult to do but things that worked out beautifully and were worth taking the risk?

Doug Burris: I think that some of the greatest successes we've experienced in the district have come from some of my worst failures. I can think of this simple event that happened. I know that employment has a great effect on people staying out of prison and also lowering crime rates. Father Greg Boyle who runs the largest gang intervention program in California has a saying, "Nothing stops a bullet like a job."

Mark Sherman: This is Homeboy Industries, right?

Doug Burris: Correct. That is so true. My first week on the job I said we're going to find extremely high paying jobs for people and there will be no crime. We actually met with a large automotive manufacturer who agreed to experiment and hire some of our people. So we had four people that were hired and started on the same day. And within a month, three had quit or didn't show up. That was completely my fault because we didn't ask them, would you like to work, do this type of work? What are your interests or anything like that?

So others said, well, maybe we should just ask before we start placing them in specific positions of what type of work. We've taken that a step further by doing a vocational assessment on them that will help them identify things too. But simply asking, 99 percent of the time they're going to come up with something that is obtainable, that is realistic. And then you're going to have the 1 percent that either want to be a rap star or run a club, but they can do that part-time.

Again, some of the greatest failures that I've had personally have resulted in others cleaning up my messes and taking us to the next level. It was a lot of begging right off the bat when I started because there was no funding. We had to ask for favors and appeal to the goodness of people's hearts. But what we found that surprised me perhaps the most, when we approached some employers about hiring our folks, they would

say, look, I got a cousin in prison, or my son has done time or my daughter, because of a mental health issue, has been in jail. If you've got people that you will promise that will show up and be drug-free, we're willing to give them a chance.

I shouldn't have been surprised by that because statistically 1 out of every 15 people in the United States will serve a prison term, not a jail term for a DUI or anything like that, but a felony conviction resulting in a prison term. So it was the law of averages that these employers are going to have some personal experience.

Mark Sherman: So, in terms of federal probation and pretrial in the criminal justice system generally, why do you think it's so important for leaders to take risks? When I think about this, Doug, the first thing that comes to mind is your hiring of Clark Porter, a man who served time in federal prison for armed robbery, to work in your department. On the surface at least to a lot of people, that just seems like a crazy risk to have taken, but that huge risk has turned out beautifully. So can you provide some insight into your thinking about risk-taking as a criminal justice leader?

Doug Burris: I think what helped me the most with this perhaps was the leadership development training I underwent with Michael Siegel. He taught me that there's a difference between management and leadership. You can manage money but you have to

lead people. So I just remain thankful for that. So you have to be bold and move forward. If you look for the leaders that you have personally admired, they have taken chances and they have been brave.

So when it came to the hiring of Clark Porter, he was a man who served 15 years on a charge of robbing a post office which he got about $660 from. He was 17 years old and went through the federal system because it was a post office. He actually received a 35-year sentence but he committed this crime about a year before the guidelines came out, so it was not the Truth in Sentencing that we have today.

Mark Sherman: This is before the implementation of the Sentencing Reform Act?

Doug Burris: Right. When he came out, he was just a star when he would come in. I would see him present and do other things. Actually, the day I met him was the day he graduated from college, when he showed up at my door in a cap and gown with his probation officer. He had his degree in his hand and his officer said to me, "You need to meet Clark. He's got an amazing story." And his story was beyond amazing frankly.

He grew up in total poverty with a mother who was illiterate and a father who was absent. His siblings were all taken from her because she was unable to care for them. He basically lived on the streets, dropped out of school at a very

young age, and then robbed a post office with another man who was 29 years old. And then went away to prison and ended up at Marion, the prison that replaced Alcatraz where there have been more murders than any other prison in the federal system.

And he had someone that changed his life by taking an interest with him. Every time I heard Clark's story, it made me realize that you should never underestimate the power you give someone by treating them with dignity. And you should also respect the fact that by believing in someone can produce some incredible outcomes. That's been the way with my personal life, with most of the people I know. The people in our caseloads are no different.

But a man talked to him to take his GED. Clark thought he was incapable of passing but he did. He came out. He got into Washington University, a school my SATs would not have allowed me to get into. Then he ended up getting his master's degree. And he was doing just some remarkable things. It seemed to me like a no-brainer but many others thought otherwise, including on my staff. I actually had my own personal staff talk to a Marshals' member saying, do you realize we got this guy coming in who had robbed a post office and now he's going to have access to all these guns here which of course was not the case whatsoever.

Fortunately, the judges had to get involved in our courthouse and say, "No, this man is deserving of a second chance." Of course, I didn't hire him without talking to our bench. The chief judge, Carol Jackson, was fully aware of everything. She's the real hero of this story for giving us the authority to hire Clark. Fortunately, she had seen Clark speak previously and knew what would happen. He has done an amazing job and has changed more lives than probably most ten probation officers you could find together.

Mark Sherman: You're listening to *Off Paper*, the criminal justice podcast from the FJC. I'm talking with chief U.S. probation officer, Doug Burris, who after 18 years as a criminal justice leader will be retiring shortly. We're going to take a short break and when we return, I'll ask Doug about some of the challenges criminal justice leaders are currently confronting and how leaders should measure success. I'll also ask Doug to offer some advice to new leaders as they take the reins. Stay with us, back in a moment.

Male Voice: When it comes to making a recommendation and decision about whether to release or detain a defendant charged with a criminal offense, two actors in the federal courts play key roles. The pretrial services officer who conducts the investigation, assesses the defendant's risk and develops a report containing the recommendation. And the magistrate judge

who knows the law, evaluates the officer's report and recommendation, and makes the release or detention decision.

In an effort to assist officers and judges in keeping up with the latest legal and practice developments and empirical research relevant to pretrial work, the FJC is pleased to offer Pretrial Decision Making for Magistrate Judges and Pretrial Services Officers. FJC educators and peer faculty facilitate this one day in-district program. The curriculum provides opportunities for scenario-based experiential learning and interactive discussions among the judges, officers, and faculty focusing on topics such as the Bail Reform Act, evidence-based pretrial risk assessment, and alternatives to detention. In-district delivery of the program allows it to be customized to the needs of the district. For more information, just go to fjc.dcn's probation and pretrial services education page and click on in-person and blended programs.

Mark Sherman: We're back with Doug Burris. Doug, with your impending retirement, you're now in a position to look in the rearview mirror a little bit at the criminal justice system and take some stock. We've already talked about some of the things you've been able to accomplish as a leader and innovator, so now I'm wondering how you see the challenges still facing the system, what they are. And if you could choose only one thing about the system to change, what would it be?

Doug Burris: That is a loaded question. Unfortunately, the one thing I would like to change about our system would have to change the entire country. And that is the new group of people we're bringing in, the millennials to the workforce.

Mark Sherman: Talk a little bit about that. I think that's of concern to a lot of leaders in the criminal justice system and in leadership and management generally. A day does not pass where you don't see an article in something like the *Harvard Business Review* or any sort of media that managers and leaders tend to read or look at or listen to where there is not some discussion about the challenges that millennials are posing for managers and leaders. Talk a little bit about that.

Doug Burris: The millennials I have found in most cases are a little more self-serving. They want to know what the job can do for them instead of what they can do for the job. They also want instant gratification. In fact, I think some believe that instant gratification takes too long. But I remember one person that we brought into a position who on her third day came in to talk about a promotion. And this is someone that didn't even know all the hallways in the building just yet.

But I have to tell you, there is some good in them. And that is that they do take feedback well. Their IT skills are significantly better than what my generation had. But I think there's an expectation to be more inclusionary with them.

Listen to what they say, ask what they're going through, things along those lines. I've had some great successes without any doubt. But it is frustrating when you have someone who wants a trophy for showing up. That is really, really frustrating.

You have to appeal to their passions. We all have different passions without any doubt. But my generation, most of the people I see in our system, they don't care what they get out of life; they care about what they give in their life. It's getting harder and harder to find people who have that same philosophy.

Mark Sherman: So it sounds like in addition, too, with younger employees coming into the system you offered some advice which I think is very helpful to be inclusive of their views, to solicit their input, to provide some opportunities for them to show their stuff, that kind of thing. That makes a lot of sense to me. What other challenges do you see in the system in addition to trying to integrate younger employees into the workforce?

Doug Burris: Sometimes I think we lose sight that we have to be focused on diversity every day that we work. When I started in the system, when I started as chief, there were only two African American probation officers in the district where I was appointed in a community that is about 50 percent African American. And I firmly believe that in order to help a

community, you need to look like that community. You need to be representative of that community. It's easy to lose sight of that and it is something that we must think about every single day.

Mark Sherman: So I hear that a lot from people who are advocates of diversity. I think it's important to try to unpack that a little bit. Based on your 18 years of experience just as chief, not including your experience as a line officer, let's talk about that, why is it so important for the community of officers to look like the community in which they are enforcing the law? What does it mean to look like that community? And why is that so important when it comes to doing the actual work?

Doug Burris: We could back up to Ferguson and use that as an example --

Mark Sherman: Let's do that.

Doug Burris: -- where the police force in a very diverse community, I think around half African American, was mostly white. And of course, all the leaders in the community were white. It was because of that, that the community said enough. When they had the whole situation with Michael Brown, it wasn't just what had happened to Michael Brown. What they were upset about was this could have happened to anyone in the entire community. So that's why I think it's important. Plus, I have

found if you want to have credibility in a community, you've got to look like the community. We didn't have it initially.

So when you go to a community to help, if you have lived on their streets, you have staff members who have lived on their streets, grew up in their communities, they're going to be open, they're going to want to partner and they're going to work with you towards positive change.

Mark Sherman: So it's about, as you say, credibility, right?

Doug Burris: Yes.

Mark Sherman: This person looks like me; therefore, they understand me. Is that fair?

Doug Burris: That's exactly right.

Mark Sherman: All right. So it's not simply about sort of bean counting and making sure you've got the right number of different minorities on your staff and that kind of thing. That's not what it's about. It's about connecting with the community in a meaningful way, and doing that by having people on your staff who will be out in the community on a regular basis, interacting with people in the community, who look like them.

Therefore, the people in the community feel like, if we're talking about a probation officer, for example, this probation officer can understand where I'm coming from because he looks

like me and perhaps has had very similar experiences to me. Perhaps that probation officer has gotten pulled over by a police officer when perhaps a white officer or individual may not have been pulled over in the same circumstance. That's what you're talking about.

Doug Burris: That is exactly right. And that has happened where we've had African American officers pulled over in these communities where none of the rest of us do. To the point we had to get the FBI involved.

Mark Sherman: So how does that translate into the day-to-day work that an officer does? So if an officer is out on the community that is sort of his community or her community, how does that translate into that officer being a better officer?

Doug Burris: If they came from that community, they're going to have a much greater passion to do good in the community, to better the community because that's where they're from. That's who they are. That's where they got their identity. So it only makes total sense to bring people from that community into the workforce to try to better it.

Mark Sherman: Shifting gears a little bit, I want to turn to a couple of topics where your advice might be particularly helpful to newer criminal justice leaders and some of this we've covered already just through our conversation. I ask about these because as you well know, it can get lonely at the top, so

to speak. It can sometimes be very difficult for a leader in any organization to know whether they're on track to succeed. So at least in terms of how things work in the criminal justice system, how does a leader know when he or she is on a successful path?

This is something that I think you can speak to very uniquely because for almost your entire tenure as chief, you have become known as an innovator, as somebody who is sort of out in front of the curve, sort of setting the standard often that the agencies in Washington have to catch up to. Many of the policies that you have implemented in your district have since become part of national policy. That had to be an extraordinarily lonely feeling for you when you've had pushback, you referred to before, pushback from your staff about certain innovations like hiring Clark. You've had pushback from the top where your priorities might not have matched the priorities of Washington. You've got people pushing back from all different sides. So that's got to be a pretty lonely place to be, but you seem to have thrived on it.

We now have a large number of newer chiefs in the system, I think they could really benefit from hearing your advice about how to gauge success, especially when one is an innovator and might be sort of challenging the status quo. I know that a

number of the newer chiefs would like to do that but there might be some trepidation about that.

Doug Burris: There were a few occasions where I wondered what the hell I got myself into. I remember not knowing what to do so I just left the courthouse and went on a long walk, and just remembered my first day about what I said I was going to do and I wanted to hold firm to that. Then you have to start really celebrating the successes no matter how small they may seem.

But I will tell you that two of the best days that I've had in my tenure. One was when a wife of one of my officers came to me to talk and said, "Before you got here, my husband was miserable because it was trail them, nail them, and jail them. And it was all don't help people, catch people." And she told me with just tears coming down her face saying, "With the changes you've made, he is so much happier and he is a better husband and a better father now." And that still just touches my heart to this day and this was probably 15 years ago.

The other thing was I can tell you that the great ideas typically come from bottom-up, not top-down. That's what you really need to look for on how to make changes. I had ideas but I had no idea how we were going to accomplish all these ideas. And it was my staff who said, "He's right. We can have a positive change." And they came up with the idea for the bake

sales and doing other things along those lines when we had no money and no funding. They had bought into the vision and they were the one that was going to carry all of the weight, they found a way to do that.

Mark Sherman: So what I'm taking away from those two pieces of advice are in terms of starting from the bottom up. This I think is something that applies systemically as well as within the department, right?

Doug Burris: Yes.

Mark Sherman: So you're talking within the department, talk to your people, solicit ideas from your people. Not unlike what you were talking about with newer employees who are, quote/unquote, millennials.

Doug Burris: Right.

Mark Sherman: Ask them what they think should be done.

Doug Burris: Yes.

Mark Sherman: And try to take that sort of crowdsource. Take that information and develop initiatives from the bottom up that way. That's one thing that you're talking about.

Doug Burris: Absolutely.

Mark Sherman: The other thing that you mentioned in terms of celebrating success I think is it's a lot less lonely at the top when you are helping people find meaning in their work, right? I think this is something that, again, not only in

criminal justice but certainly in criminal justice, this is a problem that I think professionals, whether they are probation officers or prosecutors or defense attorneys or judges, this is an issue that I think we are having to confront in criminal justice. It's particularly, I think, important in a system that's administering justice for the professionals to not lose sight of why they got into the work to begin with.

It sounds to me like with the story of the spouse of the officer saying to you, "Thank you so much for the work that you're doing because it's been so inspiring for my spouse and he sees meaning in his work now," basically, this is something that I know that is important to you. You find meaning in your work by focusing on the reasons we do this work in the first place, why we got into it in the first place and not losing sight of that. And it sounds like for a leader to try to instill that reminder constantly within the rank and file about here's why we do the work, right? Let's do this together. So does that make sense?

Doug Burris: Absolutely. When you are celebrating success sometimes you're accomplishing multiple goals. For instance, when you have a reentry court celebration, veterans court, mental health court celebration, GED graduation, vocational training graduation, a computer award ceremony - anything along those lines - not only are you celebrating the transition of the

person, but I think you're celebrating the outcomes that the officer is producing. You have to just lock onto those great things because you're not always going to have success. So celebrate it while you have it.

Mark Sherman: So one of the things we've been talking about in the system lately or at least over the last couple of years, though I think this is something that you have known for your entire tenure as an officer including your tenure as chief, is that officers can be change agents, right?

Doug Burris: Yes. Absolutely.

Mark Sherman: We hear that buzz term a lot lately but officers can be change agents. And you're saying, celebrate the success certainly of the client but understand the role of the officer in facilitating or catalyzing that change.

Doug Burris: That is the most important thing we can do. Everyone loves success and people like being recognized. It might be the person on our case or the client who is up there in a cap and gown, but the officer facilitated that. You need to acknowledge that with your staff.

Mark Sherman: Doug Burris, I want to thank you so much for this conversation. I think I speak not just for myself but certainly for the Federal Judicial Center, and perhaps even the larger criminal justice practice community in congratulating you on an amazing tenure as chief in Missouri Eastern.

Doug Burris: Thank you, Mark. Again, it has been a great honor to specifically work with you, with the people at the Federal Judicial Center who do amazing things.

Mark Sherman: *Off Paper* is produced by Paul Vamvas. The program is directed by Craig Batten [phonetic]. I'm Mark Sherman, thanks for listening. See you next time.

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