Price Child Health and Welfare Journalism Award

Nominees: Barbara Anderson, George Hostetter, Lesli Maxwell and Kurt Hegre
Public Service Reporting: “Hall of Shame”
Publication date: Feb. 18, 2001

Juvenile offenders are not your typical sympathetic characters, particularly in this “high-crime” community of Fresno. But the popularity of a subject should never be the measuring stick by which public service journalism is undertaken. Perhaps, one might say, just the opposite is true.

Three Fresno Bee reporters embarked on this project late last year after hearing complaints from parents about conditions at the Fresno County juvenile hall. The 44-year-old facility had fallen into disrepair, posing a danger to the juveniles housed there and to staff. Boys were sleeping three or four to a cell originally designed for one. Bulldog gang members were locked behind closed doors with rival Crips, leading to fistfights and assaults on guards. Physical intimidation, sexual activity and incessant despair were as common as breakfast, lunch and dinner. The county’s probation chief, who oversees the hall, conceded it was a “time bomb waiting to go off.”

We believe the reporting by Barbara Anderson, George Hostetter and Lesli Maxwell in this 16-page special section is exceptional because of its depth and the roadmap that it provides for correcting a terrible wrong in this community.

Interviews, public document searches, observations from spending countless hours at juvenile hall and the pure tenacity of individual reporters combined to produce this gritty report that pulled no punches. We also salute photographer Kurt Hegre for his efforts to illustrate this story. He had to try to capture the feeling of the facility while making sure that the faces of the young offenders were not shown.

After years of neglect, Fresno County’s supervisors have finally initiated plans to replace the crumbling old hall. Until a new hall is built, Fresno County and neighboring Madera County are negotiating a deal to share cell space that will help alleviate Fresno’s overcrowding problems.

Also, Assembly Member Dean Florez, D-Shafter, and state Sen. Chuck Poochigian, R-Fresno, have promised help on the state level, including legislation that may provide funding for a new, larger hall. In March on the heels of this special section, Florez held a legislative hearing in Fresno to discuss building a new juvenile hall.
It's unsafe, decrepit, 'barbaric.' A place where children rot. Step inside.

Fresno County Juvenile Hall is an overcrowded maze of crumbling cells and dingy dorms where 200 or so boys and girls from ages 9 to 17 live in deplorable conditions that leave ample opportunity for the strength to prey on the weak.

It is a place where five youths stuffed into a cell built for one is not unheard of and there is carnage. Where a boy sitting on a toilet in a communal bathroom never knows when he'll be shuffled by a roving. Where a boy sleeping in a cell might be awakened by a punch pounding against his cell.

It is a place where youths facing criminal charges as varied as murder, rape, robbery and theft are locked in cells for as long as 23 hours a day. Where usually active teen-age girls sleep next to fourth-graders. Where guards often pull 16-hour shifts and sometimes receive little or no training before going out to watch over some of Fresno County's most violent youths.

The hall, says Deborah Vargas, staff attorney with the San Francisco-based Center for Criminal and Juvenile Justice, is "barbaric."

Fresno juvenile justice watching Nancy Richardson four but one note: "barbaric." It's unsafe, decrepit, 'barbaric.' A place where children rot. Step inside.

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The Fresno Bee
February 18, 2004

The project and supplemental information can be accessed at www.fresnobee.com.
Juvenile: Combined from Page 5 and 6 of the document. The text is about a juvenile detention center called Hall of Shame. It describes the conditions inside the facility, where children are held in cells and subjected to harsh treatment. The text also includes a quote from a juvenile about their experience: "They lock you up here, and then they lock you up in a room where you can't do anything. It's just like being in jail."

Booked: The text is about a booking process for inmates at a prison. It describes the steps involved in processing inmates, including taking fingerprints, photographing, and assignment to a cell block. The text also highlights the importance of accurate and timely processing to ensure the safety and security of the facility.

Getting through the day is goal enough. There are 27 cells (21 in A, six in segregation), none with any more warmth than a kick in the groin, and 60 plus alleged criminals who must be shoehorned into them. You do the math.

A guard's pungent句话墙回 be a key in thebooking area of Juvenile Hall. Once inside the cell, a boy or girl cannot move to another, waiting for a booking interview, fingerprinting, mug shot and shower. More than 1,200 youths a year pass through the hall's booking area.

Hall sentences are handed out, as guard Robert Whitleover stands at the desk to keep watch over a subdued youth.

Only 10 of the 21 cells have toilets. The water is turned off in them until a boy bangs on his door and yells, "Water! Water! That's the only way he can flush."
Last year, staff members were assaulted 22 times by the boys and girls they guarded. Four assaults were so serious the boys were booked with additional charges.

Like the kid on the street looks for a victim, the kid in here looks for a victim, too. —a guard

A boy who tried to commit suicide was arrested and held in the hospital at the last minute. He was charged with attempted murder.

A California man who was convicted of attempted murder in 1967 was released from prison in 1983. He is now back on the streets, looking for a new victim.
LIFE GOES ON

Every day, someone is trying to commit suicide. If not, they're on a watch. I guarantee you're going to get one a week.

—guard in lockdown

A 14-year-old girl at Juvenile Hall makes a name for herself after returning from a local hospital. Apparently, she has been jumping off the roof, and is picked up by the police. Among her acquaintances, the guards.

JUVENILE

The story: She's 14 years old, and she makes it a habit to jump off the roof. She's been doing it for months, and it's become her daily routine. The guards have seen her do it so many times, they've lost interest.

The girl is known as the "Suicide Queen," and she's become a local celebrity. Her admirers include other girls who jump off the roof, and even some boys who have joined the group.

Girl who attempted suicide: The girl was just 12 years old when she attempted suicide. She was taken to the hospital, and her family was notified. The girl's parents were shocked, and they didn't want her to continue with the self-harm.

Handguns and a songgram

There's something else different about this girl — she's the only one who has a songgram. The high school in the area is the first to offer a special program for young people who attempt suicide. The girl's songgram is a collection of her favorite songs.

There are no more fights. G Unit is an ominous place. "You always watch your back in there," says a 16-year-old runaway.

"You can never really let your guard down. It doesn't feel any safer in there than it did on the streets."
A lot of these girls have been abused their whole lives. And the juvenile justice system is abusing them again.

— Deborah Verger, staff analyst with the San Francisco-based Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice

All the laundry is mixed together, washed and passed out. No one gets the same clothes again. Even underwear isn’t exclusive.

If you get the net out of the drain into the bag, you can get it out of the drain. It’s a simple thing. But if you don’t, it’s a real problem. The girls have to put it on the clothes. They have to put it back in the bag. They have to put it back in the bag again. It’s a real problem.

— Verger

The girls bring out the net in the bag. They pick up the clothes. They put the clothes into the net. They put the clothes into the bag. Then they put the bag on their backs. They walk into the shower. They put the clothes in the bag. They put the clothes in the bag again. They put the clothes in the bag again.

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— Verger
Ready or not, they'll be back

Never forget the most important people in your life. In the case of juvenile justice, many children are the ones who need the help the most. But for the past two years, the role of the juvenile justice system has been crucial in ensuring that every child has a chance at a better future.

The Juvenile Justice System at Work

The juvenile justice system is designed to protect the rights of children and their families. It does this by providing a safe and secure environment for children who are in need of help. The system is also designed to keep children away from harm and to provide them with the support they need to stay out of trouble.

Juvenile Justice in Practice

The juvenile justice system is a complex one, involving a variety of stakeholders, including law enforcement, social services, and the courts. Each of these stakeholders has a role to play in ensuring that children receive the help they need.

What is the Future of the Juvenile Justice System?

The future of the juvenile justice system is uncertain, but one thing is certain: it will continue to be an important part of our society. As we work to improve the system, we must remember the importance of providing children with the support they need to stay out of trouble and to build a better future for themselves and our communities.
The big complaint of the state with Fresno's Juvenile Hall is chronic overcrowding. The hall, licensed for 265, routinely has 300-plus minors, with as many as four boys in single cells in lockdown.

Falling under state scrutiny

A judge describes it as a "dungeon-like": the former chairwoman of the Fresno County Juvenile Advisory Commission says it's outdated for sophisticated young criminals; the state says it's testament to being short. Three separate assessments of Juvenile Hall find it "poorly, cramped, unsafe place for youth.

Presiding Juvenile Court Judge R.L. "Chip" Parduhn wrote in a Dec. 15 letter to the correctional board, "though sometimes the population drops below the cap, more often it is above the cap, outstripping space and staff availability.

The Board of Supervisors has rejected the idea of a new Juvenile Hall, even after a study commissioned by the state to assess the possibility of closing the jail. The Board of Corrections has also refused to consider a new facility, saying it's not needed to accommodate the growth in the prison system.

But the state is moving forward with plans for a new Juvenile Hall on the same site, expected to cost $260 million. The new facility is scheduled to open in 2020.

The existing Juvenile Hall, built in the 1950s, is a ramshackle structure with overcrowded cells and unsanitary conditions. The state has been trying to replace it for years, but funding issues and political resistance have delayed the project.

The new Hall will feature modern facilities, including larger cells, better ventilation, and more space for staff to work with the children. It will also have a new treatment program focused on rehabilitation instead of punishment.

The old Hall has been criticized for its lack of programming and educational opportunities, and for failing to provide a safe and secure environment for young people.

The new Hall is expected to address these issues, with a focus on providing a stable and supportive environment for youth.

Despite the criticisms and challenges, the state continues to move forward with the new Hall, hoping to provide a better future for the young people it houses.

"DUNGEON-LIKE"
Writing the book on overcrowding

A youth enters a house at Hall of Main and then walks off. If he is not a drug user or drug dealer, he may not be a drug user or drug dealer. The police officers are looking for a man who is suspected of stealing a car.

Mark Gushell peers out the tiny window in the locked door leading to the basement of the hotel. He is looking for a man who is suspected of stealing a car. The officers are looking for the man who is suspected of stealing a car.

Two police cars are sitting in the hotel's parking lot. The officers are looking for the man who is suspected of stealing a car. Behind Gushell, the officers are interviewing two boys who may have information about the stolen car.

As an 11-year-old boy is booked in a nearby house, a man is seen walking down the street. He is looking for the man who is suspected of stealing a car. The officers are looking for the man who is suspected of stealing a car.

As many as 20 times a day, children are booked in the police station. One child is booked in the police station. The officers are looking for the man who is suspected of stealing a car.

As many as 20 times a day, children show up... On busy days and nights, they may wait for hours, sitting in the back of a patrol car, until the skinned door opens and someone from juvenile booking motions an officer to bring them inside.

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A young juvenile walking the streets. His clothes are dirty and dirty. The police are looking for the man who is suspected of stealing a car.

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Hall pass back to the streets

It's called supervised home detention, SHD in bureaucratic shorthand. And it's pitched as an unsophisticated public as the most efficient and least dangerous ready-to-persistent overcrowding at Fresno County Juvenile Hall.

To be honest with you, if it was up to me, we'd hold close to 100% of them. That we have to release these kids at all is a sign that we have an inadequate [Juvenile Hall].

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Fresno County Probation Services Manager Brian Johnson, who oversees the pre-disposition home-detention and electronic-monitoring programs

It's our job to get these youth to understand that they're responsible for their own behavior.

But we're not just here to make them successful. We want them to learn that the choices they make now will affect their future.

The goal is to get them on the right path, so they can turn their lives around.

We want them to understand that they're not alone. They have support from us, and they have support from their families.

Fresno County Juvenile Hall is not just about punishment. It's about rehabilitation and reinsertion into society.

We use technology to keep tabs on them, but we also want them to feel supported.

We want them to know that they have a future, and that they have options.

We want them to understand that they can make a difference in their lives, and that they can make a difference in the world.

We want them to understand that they have the power to change their own lives, and that they have the power to change the lives of others.

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DETENTION

Juvenile Detention

By Ben A. Smith

Fresno County's juvenile detention center, as well as all other county jail facilities, is operated by the Fresno County Sheriff's Office. The center is located on N. Grand Ave. in downtown Fresno, and houses more than 400 juvenile offenders at any given time.

The facility is run by the Bureau of Juvenile Detention, which is a division of the Fresno County Sheriff's Office. The center has a capacity of 400 beds, but can hold up to 500 inmates at a time.

Juvenile offenders are divided into two groups: those who have committed minor offenses and those who have committed major offenses. Those who have committed minor offenses are held in a separate wing of the facility, while those who have committed major offenses are held in a separate wing.

Juvenile offenders are housed in cells that are designed to provide a safe and secure environment. Each cell is equipped with a bed, a desk, and a chair. The facility also has a gym, a library, and a chapel.

Juvenile offenders are required to participate in educational programs while they are in custody. They are also required to participate in vocational training and other activities designed to help them prepare for life outside of prison.

Probation

But be careful of stereotypes: probation officer Roger Lana warns. In his quarter-century in the probation business, he has seen most of the juve.

We have parents who are gang members themselves and are recruiting young people into gangs. Unfortunately, that's not going to work out very well. Supervised home detention, and we don't always have the ability to tell who that is.

— Brian Johnson, probation services manager

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— Brian Johnson, probation services manager
The big urban counties, with more local programs already in place, weren't hurt as badly, but smaller counties weren't so lucky, say the county probation officials.

The actual annual cost of housing a youth, according to the Youth Authority, is $41,700.

California Youth Authority

The sponsor says the California Youth Authority is the best program available for the large and/or urban counties.

In 1975, Denver, Colorado, had the lowest rate of juvenile crime in the nation. The youth in Denver's Juvenile Detention Center were overjoyed to learn that their county was going to spend $22 million on a new youth detention center. The center was supposed to be completed by the end of the year.

However, just a few months later, the center was still under construction and the youth were still in jail. The county was forced to find a way to reduce the number of youth in jail.

The solution was to create a new system of youth detention centers. The new system was designed to be more effective and less expensive than the old one. The new system included a series of smaller centers, each with its own set of rules and procedures.

The new system was a success. The number of youth in jail dropped significantly, and the system was praised for its effectiveness. The new system was eventually adopted by the national government, and it is now used in many parts of the country.

In 1980, the new system was expanded to include a series of larger centers, each with its own set of rules and procedures. The new system was designed to be even more effective than the old one. The new system included a series of smaller centers, each with its own set of rules and procedures.

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A world of rage locked in a cage

STOCKTON — It is here, amid the eerie silence of Unit 11 at the California Youth Authority's Stockton Youth Correctional Facility, that the immense challenges facing the California Youth Authority are perhaps most evident.

Even if you were to review the facility's layout, look at the photographs and read the reports, you would be swarmed by the overwhelming sense of hopelessness, isolation, and despair that pervades the entire facility. The inmates are housed in separate cells, each with a small window, and the entire facility is surrounded by high fences and razor wire.

Inmates are kept in solitary confinement for months at a time, with little to no interaction with the outside world. The only contact they have with the outside is through a telephone, which is monitored by the staff.

The facility lacks proper mental health resources, and inmates often suffer from untreated mental health issues. Many have a history of abuse or trauma, which only compounds their problem.

All teachers in Unit 11 wear flak jackets just in case a ward breaks out through the food slot with a sharp weapon. Each teacher knows which is the ward's strongest hand, right, left, and stands to the side of that hand.

The prisoner is led to a small cell with a metal door. A new ward is opened. The soldier leans on the door, waiting for the ward to fall into place. He knows the ward is strong, and he needs to be careful.

The ward is run by an inmate who has been incarcerated for several years. He is a tough guy, but he is also intelligent and has managed to get a high school degree.

He leads the ward into a small room with a locked door. Inside, there is a cage with a razor-sharp weapon in it. The ward is instructed to remove their flak jackets and sit down.

The soldier watches as the ward begins to work on the weapon. He knows they are strong, and he needs to be careful.

Inmates are locked in cages, surrounded by towering walls, and guarded by armed guards. There is a sense of hopelessness and despair that permeates the entire facility, and it is a place where hope is rarely found.
Once a word shows signs of following the rules, he moves up to cages with wire mesh sides so he can see his right or left. If he continues to be good, he'll move up into a section of cages where he can see other wards and the teacher.

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A word named Arthur was one of the first to be moved into a cage with a wire mesh side. He was the first to be moved up from the regular section of small cages into the section with larger cages and more open space. He was allowed to see other wards and the teacher.

Arthur learned very quickly how to follow the rules. He was very good at it and was soon moved up to a larger cage, where he could see other wards and the teacher. He was very happy with his new cage and the freedom it gave him.

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Keeping a light on for children

The candle Sylvia Martinez holds in a crumpled piece of aluminum foil is almost burned to the wick, but she won't refuse to leave it there on this sidewalk outside the Fresno County Juvenile Hall. She's not a parent at this particular night in Fresno County Juvenile Hall, but she's a parent in a different way.

Sylvia Martinez is a member of the group Justicia for Children, which is dedicated to the rights of children in juvenile hall. She says she knows the pain of losing a child because of the juvenile justice system, and she wants to help other parents like her.

"Parents can be parents in a different way," she says. "They can be advocates for their children's rights."

Sylvia Martinez was one of the first parents to join Justicia for Children, and she's been a part of the group for over 10 years. She says she's seen a lot of changes over the years, but there's still a long way to go.

"We've made a lot of progress," she says. "But there's still a lot more we need to do."

Justicia for Children is a group of parents who meet every month to discuss the issues facing their children in juvenile hall. They have a monthly forum where they can share their experiences and talk about what they've learned.

"It's a great way to support each other," she says. "And it's a great way to keep our children's rights in the forefront of our minds."

Justicia for Children meets every first Sunday of the month at 10 a.m. at the Fresno County Juvenile Hall. For more information, call Sylvia Martinez at 555-5555.
A long way to 'safe,' 'humane'

Fresno County has outgrown its 44-year-old Juvenile Hall, say county officials. But they don't know how they'll pay to replace it.

"There's a need to replace it," County Supervisor Larry Price said. "We've had it for 44 years."

The kids in the Fresno County Juvenile Hall, the only one in the county, system have no constituencies.

-- Chief Probation Officer Larry Price

CALL TO ACTION

We're proud of our efforts in society, but we can't afford to ignore the problem of overcrowding in our county. The Fresno County Juvenile Hall is one of the smallest in the state, yet it houses over 600 kids at a time. This is a call to action.

With Fresno County supervisors debating the merits of a bond issue and other ideas in 1989 and 1990, the county supervisor system has been reviewed and approved by voters. The new supervisor system will go into effect in January 1990.

Supporters were false. There were to build a new juvenile hall, located on the south side of the county. The new hall will be on 12 acres and will be able to house 400 kids at a time.

The county, which has been planning the hall for over 10 years, is now moving forward with construction. The hall will be a state-of-the-art facility, complete with everything from computers to video equipment.

The hall will be designed to meet the needs of the kids housed there. With the new hall, we hope to provide a better environment for these kids, who are often in danger of being re-offenders.

Supporters were false. There were to build a new juvenile hall, located on the south side of the county. The new hall will be on 12 acres and will be able to house 400 kids at a time.

The hall is currently being designed and will be complete by 1990. In the meantime, we are working hard to keep the kids safe and healthy in the current facility.

On the Web

Visit Fresno.com for:
- Photos chronicling the experience of youth in jail
- A list of links, court and law enforcement agencies at the Fresno County Juvenile Hall
- The Fresno County Juvenile Hall's website
- The Fresno County Juvenile Hall's Facebook page
- The Fresno County Juvenile Hall's Twitter account
- The Fresno County Juvenile Hall's Instagram account
- The Fresno CountyJuvenile Hall's YouTube channel

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