



### **Straight-A Guide Newsletter #3: Document the Journey**

December 24, 2011

Dear Straight- A Guide Participants:

I write to wish each of you the best holiday season possible. Although conditions may separate you from loved ones, the power lies within you to provide those you love with a gift. By living in accordance with the Straight-A Guide, you may offer a pledge in their honor. Write your loved ones with news of your commitment to move through the new year in strict accordance with the values-based, goal-oriented adjustment patterns that will prepare you for success upon release. That gift will empower you and those to whom you make the pledge.

People who stand beside prisoners want them to come home. Although prisoners may not have the power to advance their release dates, they may work daily toward preparations that will advance prospects for success upon release. Such a commitment requires discipline and deliberate focus. The Straight-A Guide helps prisoners sustain that discipline and focus, enabling participants to move through the noise of confinement that continuously threatens to derail a commitment to success. Any activity or distraction that does not advance preparations for success is noise. To the extent that prisoners are able to tune out the noise and keep working toward their commitment to succeed upon release, they triumph over imprisonment. That is a gift all loved ones appreciate.

On page 23 of the Straight-A Guide Workbook, Michael offered readers a look at the values and goals that carried him through 2011. In an effort to distinguish his adjustment from those who deluded themselves with the "happy talk" that pervaded all prison environments, he invited others to judge him in accordance with seven value categories that he said would define him. Those value categories included a commitment to discipline, fitness, godliness, industriousness, integrity, marriage, and his support network. He established clear goals within each value category, knowing that to the extent he pursued those goals, he would live on a principled path that harmonized with values he wanted to define him.

That strategy carried Michael through 25 holiday seasons and new years. Those of us at the Straight-A Guide ask you to establish a similar strategy. As you move through the final 12 days of 2011, think about steps you can take during 2012 that will set you on a principled, deliberate path that advances preparations for your success upon release.

Each participant of the Straight-A Guide has an opportunity to publish values and goals on his personal profile at Straight-A-Guide.com. Simply title the submission Values and Goals, 2012. If an example would help, turn to page 23 of the Straight-A Guide Workbook. The values and goals that you establish will provide a map for you to follow through 2012. That map will guide you through the noise, helping you to navigate your way to success. Your family and loved ones

will have clarity, understanding exactly how you are preparing for success in a principled, deliberate way. Whenever you feel the pressures closing in, you may turn to your values and goals, relying upon them as a guide to sustain you through the climb.

I look forward to working with you through 2012. Through efforts each of you make to document your journey on your personal profile at [Straight-A-Guide.com](http://Straight-A-Guide.com), we're working as a unified team to conquer imprisonment and prepare for success upon release. Count on me to help.

Happy holidays!

Justin Paperny  
Executive Director  
Michael G. Santos Foundation