



COMMON GROUND

SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT NEWS LETTER

SUPERINTENDENT

YOLANDA SMITH

Under the direction of Steven W. Tompkins Superintendent Yolanda Smith leads the South Bay House of Correction. Read her story as we celebrate **Women's History Month**. - page 3

"We aren't just here to incarcerate people."

A Look Inside our Vocational Education Programs. - page 4

Re-offend or Recidivate?

"Securing a job after incarceration is one of the most critical elements in determining whether or not a person will re-offend or recidivate." - page 2





Our Newsletter

The Common Ground Institute Newsletter is made available monthly for Department employees by the office of External Affairs and Communications at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. The newsletter is available to staff and external audiences and may be viewed at www.scsdma.org. It is printed as part of our Graphic Arts/Printing program at the South Bay House of Correction.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department is committed to becoming the national model for providing effective offender supervision and re-entry services that ensure public safety. The Department serves the cities of Boston, Chelsea, and Revere and the town of Winthrop. Suggestions for content are always welcome.

The Sheriff's Statement

This issue of the Common Ground newsletter was assembled with the goal of providing readers with a brief overview of some of the vocational programming that the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department makes available to inmates and detainees at the Suffolk County House of Correction.

As the Sheriff of Suffolk County, my mandate is for the care and custody of those remanded to our facilities by the courts. The majority of the people who make up our population come to us with reading and math proficiency levels that range between the 5th and 6th grades, and many lack the skills and work experience to find sustainable employment.

To help mitigate these needs, we have placed a heavy emphasis on vocational education and training, teaching valuable, employable skills to those in our custody that can help them to re-enter society primed for success and better able to provide for themselves and their families. With new skills and greater prospects for gainful, stable employment, former offenders are far less likely to return to criminal behavior and recidivate, which in turn serves to make Suffolk County a safer place to live.

I hope that you will enjoy this brief look "behind the walls" at our Vocational Education Division, and, more importantly, I hope that you will gain a greater understanding of our commitment to changing the lives of those in our care and custody as we work to positively transform our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Tompkins". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins
Suffolk County Sheriff's Department

Meet House of Correction Superintendent Yolanda Smith

One February day back in 2013, Yolanda Smith walked through the doors of the Suffolk County House of Correction much the same as she had done over the past 20 years. On this particular day, however, she entered bearing the full honor and weight of responsibility implied by the new title now bestowed upon her – Superintendent.

Having served the Department for more than two decades, first as a correction officer, then as corporal, lieutenant, captain, assistant deputy superintendent and assistant superintendent – Superintendent Smith's ascent through the ranks proved her to be a dedicated, proactive and capable leader worthy of the designation. Whether earning the responsibilities of Shift Commander, Building Supervisor and Director of Training, or participating in youth outreach efforts like D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) or the Choice Program – which is designed to discuss the dangers of drug use and gang involvement, as well as the consequences of criminal activity, for school-aged children – the road to her current position was paved with hard work and a strong commitment to the Department.

Now, in her third year at the helm, Superintendent Smith oversees an inmate population of nearly 1,800 and a staff of more than 500 trained correction officers.



In addition to her work at the House of Correction, Superintendent Smith is the Chairperson of the Massachusetts Sheriff's Association Education Training Committee (MSAETC), where she serves as Chairperson to the executive branch of the committee.

For the past five years, Superintendent Smith has been co-chairperson of the MSAETC Spring Conferences, bringing forth new, innovative topics that benefit a wide array of public safety personnel. In 2010, she successfully completed the Federal Bureau of Investigation Crisis Negotiator course, which had various agencies represented from across New England – and she is a 2010 graduate of Lead Boston.

Additionally, Superintendent Smith serves on SCSD's Policy Review Committee, and she is currently on the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination referral list of trainers in Harassment/Discrimination prevention in the workplace. She is also a member of the Massachusetts Sentencing Commission. ■



“Right now, we have over 80 programs for the men and women in our custody,” said Superintendent Smith. “We are very programmatic, and our reentry process starts from the moment that an individual comes through Booking. We assess each person to determine who has mental health related issues, who needs education and at what level, who has anger issues - and then we classify them and provide programming, based on their needs. We learned long ago that there is no cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach for those in our custody. Together, with all of our officers and staff, this Department will continue to evolve and remain the trailblazer of good, sound corrections.”

"We aren't just here to incarcerate people"

The Common Ground Institute

"If you teach a person how to cook, how to clean, lay a floor, hang a window - they are employable," Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins has stated. Before serving as Sheriff, in his days as Chief of External Affairs, he saw a desperate need to address the issue of workforce development among the incarcerated population at the House of Correction and Nashua Street Jail. Thus was born the Common Ground Institute (CGI) to assist inmates who have gaps in employment as a result of incarceration, and who otherwise often lack a consistent job history and employable skills. CGI is a 10-week vocational skill-based program that is divided into two five-week modules. Each section is designed to enhance and fortify employment skills that aid participants with hands-on development abilities to prepare for post-incarceration life in society.

Over the first five weeks of training, CGI students spend their afternoons in a classroom setting, where they are taught carpentry, custodial maintenance, painting and landscaping. During the carpentry training, students learn how to properly clean and change air filters, repair and replace floor tiles and carpet, and disassemble and repair defective equipment. Additional instruction includes using a spray gun, replacing and repairing plaster walls, and the proper use of lubricants, hand tools and measuring devices. In addition, as part of the first portion of the program's module, students also must study for and complete a 10-hour training course, for general industrial safety and health standards, to receive an Occupational Safety and Health Administration certification, which is required on all federally funded job sites.

Speaking about the CGI and vocational training as a whole, Captain David Granese, the Director of Vocational Education, said, "we aren't just here to incarcerate people - we are here to help people better themselves when their sentences end, and they go back to their families."



During the second five weeks of the cycle, class participants are able to apply many of the things they've learned in the academic portion, through the Community Works Program (CWP). As both a means of restitution and an opportunity to practice their new skills, CWP allows inmates to perform services throughout the community, such as cleaning up trash, planting greenery, carpentry, custodial maintenance, painting, and more. SCSD has partnered with: the City of Revere, the City of Boston's Inspectional Services Department, Department of Neighborhood Development, and Economic Development Industrial Corporation, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Department of Conservation and Recreation, and Highway Authority. After concluding the two five-week cycles, inmates are eligible for graduation, which includes an apprenticeship certificate from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, an OSHA certificate, and the knowledge and experience to earn laborer's pay rates upon their release.

"Our Common Ground Institute really helps our population get real-life applications, experience and qualifications to get those entry-level, construction-related jobs, or to become ground managers, or superintendents of a golf course, cemeteries, campuses, hotels, resorts and much more," said Captain Granese.

"Programs like these are what we are all about at the Sheriff's Department," said Sheriff Tompkins. "It isn't simply enough to take care of inmates while they're in our facilities - we have to provide them with the tools that they need to improve themselves when they return to their communities, so that they don't come back. With these new skills under their belts, they have a chance to achieve better, for themselves and their families."



A Recipe for Success

The Culinary Arts Vocational Education Program

Envisioned in 2013 by Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins, the Culinary Arts program graduated its first participants in January of 2014. In the program's two-year duration, students have learned about: kitchen safety; proper use of utensils; culinary terminology; teamwork in a kitchen environment; and demonstrate knowledge in basic math and reading, which is required to prepare and cook foods properly.

Created with the purpose of training inmates in food service industry basics, the ultimate goal of the Culinary Arts program is to impart skills that will enable participants to become employable as line cooks, preparation cooks, assistant-bakers, and more upon return to society.

"This program isn't merely a path to being a dishwasher; it covers a range of chef skills, like preparing meals. It's a very thorough program," said Chef Dominic Bartholomew, who leads the Culinary Arts program. "We teach them the same things as in a 'cordon bleu' course - we teach them to make sauces, chowders, meat fabrication, and the breakdowns. This is a 120-hour class that requires you to pass a 120-question test before you actually graduate from this program."

The lessons that Culinary Arts participants learn are demonstrated clearly during the program's graduation, for which several varieties of chicken wings, crab rangoons, caprese appetizers, pizzelles, quinoa cupcakes, cold cut roll ups, corn fritters, enchiladas, fruit salad, cream puffs, and other foods are displayed. Beyond these, participants of the program learn production, as well as basic cutting skills. The Culinary Arts students also learn firsthand about farm-to-table cuisine, thanks to the "urban farm" that is on site. There, the students plant, tend and harvest vegetables such as broccoli, artichokes, lettuce, spinach and herbs - and then cook them.

Students of the course are also given a new recipe each week by the teaching staff, and are tasked with incorporating their own unique elements into a new unique recipe that is specific to them. "We ask for our students to take written recipes and tweak them - make them their own," said Chef Bartholomew. "They have to give us three new final products a week, while learning about time management, and learning to work with one another."

Participants also complete trainings in proper food sanitation, and receive National Institute of Food Industry Sanitation certificates. This 21-hour, seven-week program provides instruction in the regulations governing sanitation, where bacteria are found, how food becomes contaminated, which foods are potentially hazardous, and methods for the elimination of those hazards. This certificate is well recognized in the food industry, and leads to employment in that field. ■





Basic Auto Course

The Basic Auto course is one of the newest additions to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's vocational education programming. Last December, the SCSD's first class graduated, and the second cycle of the program has recently started. The Basic Auto course is a nine-week program in which inmates learn the fundamentals about changing oils, lubrication, auto shop tools and equipment, electrical systems, cooling and climate control, steering, suspension, tires, and roadside emergencies. After finishing this course, inmates are given a certificate of completion, and leave with a better understanding of vehicle instruction, care and repair. ■

Urban Farm Program

Rooted in ideas of transformation and personal growth, the Urban Farming program serves as a method to teach inmates critical lessons before their release. The program's participants are specially classified inmates who are enrolled in a comprehensive training program in which lessons surrounding the basics of urban agriculture are covered. Students who are enrolled develop skills in controlling plant growth and development, from seedlings, all the way up until they are ready to be harvested and served through the Culinary Arts program. ■



Small Engine Repair

Also new to the Department, the Small Engine Repair course is four weeks long, and is designed to provide incarcerated individuals with an introductory training in repairing, maintenance and safe operation of small engine equipment. This course pays special attention to small gasoline combustion engines, such as lawn mowers, snow blowers and line trimmers and the proper techniques and uses of each respective machine. Students enrolled in the course also learn about the benefits of engine maintenance, as well as how to repair fuel, ignition, lubrication, cooling control, and exhaust systems. ■



Professional Development and Attitudinal Training (PDAT)

The PDAT program prepares people emotionally and mentally to be the best that they can be, to pursue their dreams and aspirations - by helping them to develop an appreciation for who they are. PDAT informs participants about how personal life affects professional life. The exercises are designed to challenge students to develop the areas that will increase their confidence and self-esteem, as well as help improve work habits, attitudes and expectations. ■

Basic Keyboarding

The Basic Keyboarding course is designed to help incarcerated individuals how to learn, practice and improve their typing speed and accuracy. The course is also centered around utilizing touch typing as a method, which has students memorize by muscle memory where letters are, as opposed to physically seeing them. This method allows inmates to type at much faster speeds, especially to prepare them for data entry, transcribing text, or any other visual information. This program is made for beginners and through using programs for increasing typing speeds, the goal is to increase computer productivity as a job skills attribute. After transitioning from this program, inmates may also choose to go on to the Computer Literacy course. ■



"We are preparing these inmates to take advantage of the opportunity to lead positive and productive lives."

— Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins



Computer Literacy Course

The Computer Literacy course is designed to familiarize inmates with more advanced computer concepts than basic keyboarding and provide them with hands on training in windows 7 operating systems. The software applications include Microsoft Office Professional, Microsoft Front Page Web Design and Microsoft Visual basic 6.0. It is an open enrollment program and high school diploma or GED is preferred but not required. Students learn typing, word processing and spreadsheet operations. ■

Tailoring Program

The Tailoring program is focused on exposing inmates to methods of altering and repairing clothes, so that upon their release they are eligible to work in a tailoring capacity. The program runs for three hours per day three days per week on Monday, Wednesday, and Fridays for a duration of five months. Students enrolled in the program learn to sew on buttons, hem pants, edge stitching, hem stitching, overcast stitching, fixing a running stitch, are exposed to various hand sewing techniques and sewing machine use and much more. ■



Retail Training Program

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department has developed the Common Ground Institute Retail Training Center. The retail-training program is a 4-6 week program that emphasizes skills utilized in the retail industry, as well as applicable skills that are transferable across a variety of industries. Topics discussed are Customer Service Skills which include getting to know your customer, greeting customers, communication with customers, determining a customer's needs and marketing to customers, and how to build a relationship with your customer. We also go over the ways to complete a sales transaction. We also cover the basics of monitoring inventory, stocking inventory ordering inventory and presentation of products being sold. ■



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