



COMMON GROUND

JUNE 2017 ISSUE

DEPUTY JOHN AMATE
CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEE OF
THE YEAR AWARD HONOREE



**CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM?
IT'S COMPLICATED**

Sheriff's Statement



If you've heard me speak with any regularity, then you know that I frequently refer to the profession of corrections as "the often forgotten arm of law enforcement."

If you've heard me say that, then you've also heard me say to the men and women who serve in this profession that "you may not get the

positive press for a job well done or widespread recognition for performing in one of the most difficult fields of law enforcement, but you should rest assured that those who understand what you do each and every day appreciate you to the highest degree. What you do here is of the utmost importance. For those of us in corrections, we have the ability to shape and change lives in a positive way that can impact whole families and affect entire communities."

It is rare that the officers and employees who work in this profession are honored for their service, but the Commonwealth's Annual Correctional Employee of the Year Awards provides just such an occasion. Two of our correctional employees were honored this year with awards for their roles in situations where they elevated their service to the Department and their community and rose above and beyond the call of duty in the assistance of citizens in need. In this issue of the Common Ground newsletter, we recognize them, but we also widen the spotlight to include two more of their colleagues for actions that were no less heroic and deserving of attention.

In addition, you will learn about the fiscal and physical realities that accompany our efforts to return those in our care and custody back to their communities as productive people who are better able to care for themselves and their families. You'll also read about our newest class of correction officer recruits and learn about their progress as they continue their training in the hopes of becoming members of the Department who will assist us in our ongoing efforts to make our county and Commonwealth a safer, healthier and more vibrant place to live.

-Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

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I Criminal Justice Reform? It's Complicated

Read Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins' recent Op-Ed featured in the Boston Globe about criminal justice reform.

SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT WELCOMES OFFICER CANDIDATES FOR NEW TRAINING CLASS



The COTA Class 17-01

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently launched its latest thirteen-week training academy for correction officers. The new class of officer cadets is now in-session at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Correction Officer Training Academy (COTA) in Chelsea. The COTA is a critical component of the Department because it provides cadets with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be successful Correctional Officers.

The COTA training staff is currently engaged in the process of helping this group of twenty-five officer candidates to acquire the skills, knowledge and discipline required to become correction officers for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. The current class is made up of twenty-two men and three women who, upon successful completion of Class 17-01, will graduate and begin their service as officers at the Suffolk County Jail. Eleven of the candidates hail from communities located within Suffolk County, while the other fourteen candidates come from neighborhoods across the Commonwealth and as far away as Windham, New Hampshire. Two candidates list countries of origin outside of the United States, with one claiming Haiti and the other citing El Salvador as their birthplaces. Nineteen of the twenty-five candidates are under thirty, ranging in age from

nineteen to twenty-nine. Though the graduation ceremony for Class 17-01 is slated to take place this summer, the road to the finish line will be fraught with numerous challenges for class participants.

Officer candidates will receive instruction in a variety of topics including: the use of force continuum, firearm safety and handling, suicide prevention, courtroom testimony, ethics and professionalism, inmate education, CORI and inmate rights and responsibilities, fire safety, evacuation plans, and general professional subjects which include clear and concise report writing, sexual harassment, general conduct, CPR, interpersonal communications, and more.

In addition to the trainings that they are receiving at the Chelsea Training Facility, officer candidates recently traveled to Clean Harbors in Norwell Massachusetts to receive instruction in fire safety and rescue techniques. Cadets ended the day with an obstacle course and emergency fire/smoke simulations to get hands-on experience to draw from in the event of an emergency situation.

SHERIFF STEVEN W. TOMPKINS AND THE DEPARTMENT JOIN THE COMMONWEALTH IN CELEBRATION OF HEROIC CORRECTIONAL EMPLOYEES



Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently celebrated four officers for actions taken above and beyond the call of duty this past year.

During the 20th Annual Correctional Employee of the Year Awards ceremony held at the Massachusetts State House, Sheriff Tompkins and members of the Department joined Governor Charlie Baker; Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito; Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Daniel Bennett; Undersecretary of Criminal Justice Jennifer Queally; and other County Sheriffs, elected officials and corrections professionals in recognizing the exemplary employees who were gathered to receive these prestigious awards. The ceremony, created to celebrate the notable and often heroic actions taken by those working in the field of corrections, honored 45 officials from around the Commonwealth.

Each year, the fourteen County Sheriffs and the Massachusetts Department of Correction nominate correctional employees for their bravery and dedication to public service. A selection committee comprised of leaders from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the Massachusetts Department of Correction, the Massachusetts Sheriff's Association, the Massachusetts Correctional Officer Federated Union and designees from the

Massachusetts House of Representatives and Senate determine which employees will be honored.

This year, Deputy John Amate of the Suffolk County House of Correction and former Deputy Joshua Peavey of the Suffolk County Jail were chosen to receive the Community Service Award and Meritorious Recognition Award, respectively.

While on duty with the Department's Community Works Program near South Boston's Day Boulevard, Officer Amate was approached by the driver of a handicapped transportation van who stated that her passenger was choking and in need of immediate assistance. Deputy Amate climbed into the van and calmly provided emergency rescue services to the woman in distress, administering several abdominal thrusts, which eventually dislodged the item that had been obstructing the victim's airway, quite possibly saving the woman's life.

Throughout the incident, Deputy Amate relied on his Department training and took control of this life-threatening situation. A fifteen-year veteran of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department at the House of Correction, Amate credited his training and the help of communication staff at the Department for his successful rescue.

"I am grateful that I was there at the right time and place, and I'm grateful for the training that I have," said Deputy Amate, reflecting on his award.

The second awardee, former Department Deputy Peavey, was off duty and driving home on Storrow Drive when he observed a car that had been flipped on its side and was beginning to emit smoke. Deputy Peavey pulled over and rushed to the scene in an attempt to rescue the passenger trapped in the vehicle. With the assistance of another bystander, Deputy Peavey pulled the man out of the passenger side of the car and carried the driver to safety away from the car, which had the potential to ignite. Deputy Peavey stayed with the driver of the overturned vehicle, who appeared disoriented and possibly under the influence of alcohol, until Massachusetts State Police and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) arrived.

In addition to the two Department employees honored at the official ceremony, Sheriff Tompkins also recognized two officers who were not chosen as award recipients, though their actions were no less heroic.

Deputy Stephen Fiste, a thirteen-year veteran at the Department's Suffolk County Jail, was driving on Lowell Street in Peabody with his family when he witnessed the SUV riding in front of his

vehicle swerve into the opposite lane and come to a near-stop. As another SUV pulled in front of the truck to shield it from oncoming traffic, Deputy Fiste jumped out of his car and raced to the vehicles. The driver of the second SUV – later determined to be the wife of the first driver – had exited her car and was now crying and pounding on the driver's side window of the first SUV. When Deputy Fiste arrived to the window, it was clear that the driver was having a seizure. While convulsing, the driver of the first SUV had crashed his truck into the vehicle in front of him and his foot stayed pressed against gas pedal as he continued to convulse. Acting quickly, Deputy Fiste smashed the window on the passenger side, opened the door and climbed inside where he managed to take the victim's foot off the pedal, check for vital signs, and call for an ambulance.

"My training immediately kicked in and I was able to make sure that everyone remained safe," said Deputy Fiste. "I'm grateful that I was able to assist the victim and that nobody got hurt."

The other officer receiving recognition from Sheriff Tompkins and the Department was Sergeant Nabil Said, a seventeen-year veteran of the Department at the Suffolk County Jail. Sgt. Said was working on a traffic detail near the Ted Williams Tunnel when he witnessed a hit and run in which a Department of Transportation worker was run over by the offending vehicle.

"The first thing I did was go back to my basic training and called Central Control to request an ambulance and additional assistance," recalled Sgt. Said. "After that, I followed the driver a mile down the



street, stopped him and removed the keys from his vehicle before calling for the Massachusetts State Police. When a State Trooper arrived, we both facilitated a roadside test and escorted the driver back to the cruiser. The first thing that I did in this incident was refer to my training. There was no need to panic because with the training that we have, we are able to work in all kinds of conditions."

Extending congratulations to all of the day's honorees and to those corrections professionals who were nominated but not chosen, Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins also thanked them for going above and beyond their prescribed responsibilities.

"Congratulations to Deputy Amate, former Department Deputy Peavey, all of the awardees and to all of the people who routinely go above and beyond, but who may not be recognized with an award," said Sheriff Tompkins. "Your efforts and dedication to help facilitate a safe and secure environment through which we

can begin the process of rehabilitation, recovery and reentry for the people remanded to our care and custody is both critical to our success, and applauded by those with an understanding of the job that you do."

Echoing Sheriff Tompkins' sentiments during his address at the State House ceremony was another official with particular knowledge about the importance of the work done by corrections professionals.

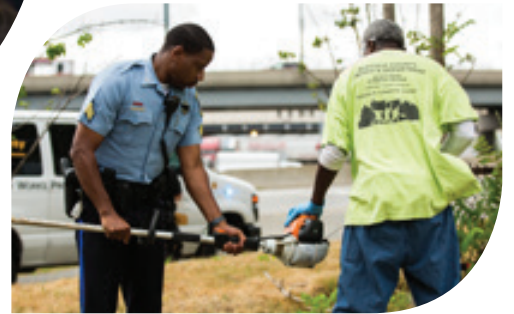
"The truth is that all of you here today are a huge part of something that we all need to focus on and be proud of," said Governor Baker. "You provide the security and safety that is so important, which helps to make it possible for many [incarcerated individuals] to find their way back to society. On behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the citizens that you keep safe, we are grateful to honor and appreciate the best among the best with these awards."



CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM?

by Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

IT'S COMPLICATED.



Criminal justice reform is complicated. Necessary, but complicated.

Trust me, I know firsthand. As sheriff of Suffolk County, I manage one of the largest correctional agencies in New England, providing care and custody to more than 1,600 people a day.

And while I have no role in deciding who is placed under my department's supervision (this is the courts' responsibility), it's my duty to ensure these incarcerated men and women are afforded secure, humane living conditions, and the best programming and services possible.

Recently, much has been made of the declining incarceration rate in Massachusetts, now the 49th lowest nationwide. Given how disruptive incarceration is to individuals, families, and communities — and the incredible fiscal burden it places on taxpayers — this is a trend we should laud and continue to support.

In large part, this progress can be attributed to lawmakers, criminal justice officials, and community activists who have worked together to develop successful alternatives to jail and prison. Specialty courts, diversion programs, and myriad changes to sentencing and CORI law have created improvements in the way we mete out justice. Over the years, Massachusetts sheriffs have not only been leading advocates for these reforms, but have contributed greatly to the reduction in crime and incarceration by offering inmates and detainees innovative education, job-training, drug treatment, and reentry programs that reduce the likelihood of recidivism.

However, the reduction in incarceration these changes have produced — though encouraging — has not resulted in the cost savings that stakeholders had hoped for. A recent study by MassInc found that while the daily population in state and county correctional facilities dropped 12 percent between fiscal 2011 and fiscal 2016, the aggregate corrections spending increased 18 percent.

At first blush, this statistic is confusing and troublesome. Why are correctional budgets growing when funding for so many worthy state programs has diminished? The truth is, it's misguided to assume that a decline in the incarceration rate — unless vast and systemic — will generate meaningful cost savings.

There are multiple reasons for this.

First, and most important, we must look at the increased needs of those who are incarcerated.

As offenders with less significant charges are diverted away from the corrections system, incarceration is reserved for individuals with the most significant problems and barriers to success. Effectively delivering rehabilitative services to these men and women — which I think most people in Massachusetts would agree is the right thing to do — is one of the most resource-intensive undertakings in government.

One need not look further than my department's admissions data to understand the breadth and depth of the crises we contend with. In 2016, we processed 11,000 unique admissions. Over 67 percent of our population suffers from a co-morbidity of mental illness and addiction. Between June and December of 2016 alone, we admitted 2,223 individuals who needed medical care at intake. Couple these problems with the prevalence of poverty, homelessness, and low educational attainment — most male inmates read at a fifth-grade level — and a more nuanced picture emerges of the expenses involved in helping the men and women in our custody.

Second, infrastructure and staffing patterns are a massive cost-driver. Modern correctional facilities — like Suffolk's jail and house of correction — were designed specifically for humane detainment, regardless of the increased resources needed to run them. For good reason, we no longer warehouse individuals



in massive, hundred-yard-long cell blocks. Instead, we have housing units with common areas, phones, and easily accessible bathrooms. For safety purposes, each unit typically requires multiple corrections officers on site, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, whether one inmate is housed there, or 70. Needless to say, the operational overhead involved is massive.

Third, sheriffs' departments are a primary transportation provider for the Massachusetts justice system. Suffolk's officers made 18,334 trips in 2016 — driving more than 47,542 detainees and inmates to courts, hospitals, and other correctional facilities from Boston to the Berkshires. Between labor, maintenance, and fuel, costs add up.

I often tell people my department is the largest de facto social service provider to the most marginalized residents in Suffolk County. The reality: We are not just a social service provider. We are a hospital, drug-rehabilitation clinic, mental health counseling center, school, job-training program, shelter,

and public transportation provider. And while we take our fiduciary responsibility to taxpayers seriously, we take the needs of the individuals in our care equally seriously. To deny them that care would be immoral, and ultimately terrible for public safety.

Yes, Massachusetts boasts the second-lowest incarceration rate in the United States. But we still jail more people per capita than 95 percent of the world. If we truly want to reduce correctional spending in the long term — without denying currently incarcerated people the services they desperately need — we must dramatically stem the flow of new individuals into our jails and prisons. This will require bolder reform. Namely, eliminating mandatory minimum sentences, overhauling our bail system, investing in more mental health and substance-abuse programming, and disrupting urban poverty at its roots.

Otherwise, reducing correctional budgets will rest on the backs of the poor, the addicted, and the mentally ill.



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NEWSLETTER

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