



COMMON GROUND

MAY 2020 ISSUE





SHERIFF'S STATEMENT

As much of the world grapples with the physical, mental and economic toll that the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take on our respective societies, this global health crisis has been punctuated by mass school and business closures, event cancellations and “stay at home” orders for many non-emergency, non-essential personnel.

But, through the heightened anxiety and uncertainty of facing a threat unlike that of any in modern times, there are those who have continued to work at a high-level, helping to heal the sick, provide needed supplies and sustenance, and maintain the function and order of society in the proverbial “eye of the hurricane.”

Richly-deserved displays of appreciation and thanks for the people on the front lines have become a reliable staple of a grateful nation, with members of the medical community, first responders, grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, sanitation agencies, utility companies, delivery services and mail carriers often receiving well-earned and welcome praise from far and wide. There is, however, another segment of the emergency, essential workforce that is equally as deserving, but far less recognized – our corrections professionals.

Here at the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department, there are many who are helping to run the 24-hour, seven-days-a-week essential operations of our facilities – the Suffolk County House of Correction and the Suffolk County Jail – during the time of COVID-19.

Continuing as they always have, with typically little fanfare, our correction officers and non-custody professionals have remained steadfast in their commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety, security and care for the people remanded to our facilities by the courts, while embracing and implementing new protocols and procedures as present circumstances have dictated.

I am extremely proud of the important work that our custody and non-custody staff members are continuing to do in the face of adversity during these uncertain times, and their commitment to professionalism and dedication to service are deserving of recognition.

-Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

SANDY ZAMOR CALIXTE - CHIEF
PETER VAN DELFT - EDITOR
OLIVIA SMITH - EDITOR
DAVID HILL - PHOTOGRAPHER
VONEL LAMOUR - DESIGNER

SHERIFF STEVEN W. TOMPKINS

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS & EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PHONE .617-704-6688

VISIT US ONLINE

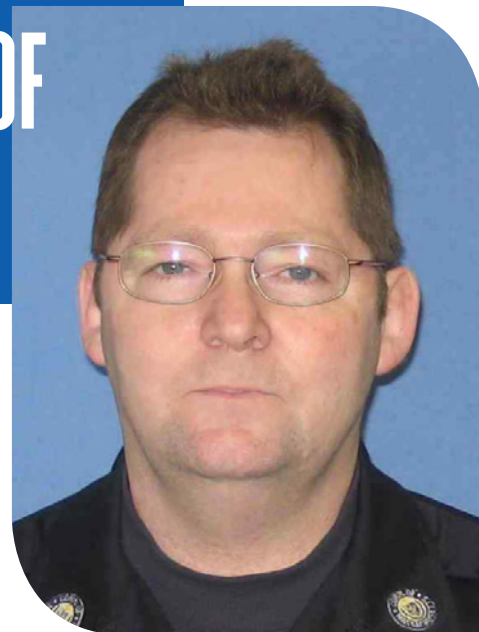
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SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT MOURNS THE LOSS OF OFFICER GREGORY RECTOR



Recently, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department announced with great sorrow the passing of Officer Gregory Rector. Officer Rector was an 18-year veteran of the Department, having served at the Suffolk County House of Correction. Officer Rector became ill in early March and was ultimately hospitalized for a brain disease. We're told that COVID-19 had been indicated as a secondary illness that contributed to further complications. Sadly, March 12th, marked his final day of work with us. Gregory was a gentle soul and one who smiled every day. He will be greatly missed by all. We wish his family and his extended SCSD family, peace and understanding during this time.

Officer Rector's funeral took place on May 1, 2020 at the Keohane Funeral Home. Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and everyone at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department would like to express our tremendous gratitude for all of the law enforcement and first responder teams that helped us to bid a final farewell to Officer Gregory Rector. Your presence and support has been uplifting in this time of sadness. We also want to thank everyone who has expressed their condolences and we, in turn, will be holding Officer Rector's family in our hearts. Rest In Peace, Officer Rector. Your service will never be forgotten.





SCSD PROVIDES RESOURCES TO RETURNING CITIZENS AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC WITH HELP FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS

During this uncertain and unsettling time, we understand that many are concerned about the safety and protection of the men and women who are being released from the care and custody of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. With returning citizens leaving from our facility on a daily basis, we want to prepare them with the resources they will need in the fight against COVID-19. With the help of community organizations such as the *New Market Business Association*, *MissionSAFE*, *Starlight Ministries-Emmanuel Gospel Center*, and *Education First*, we are able to provide returning citizens with a book bag filled with toiletries, non-perishable snacks, and information about COVID-19 with a listing of currently-available resources.

Thank you to our amazing community partners!



CORRECTIONS IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

Officers Speak About Safety, Service and Camaraderie Amidst The Global Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the global and local landscape in a variety of ways, many of which are plainly obvious to the general public. With darkened buildings that only weeks ago housed thriving businesses, schools, organizations and social venues; face-covering mandates and social distancing orders by city and state leaders; and supermarket shelves empty of everything but the signs posted to caution consumers about strict purchasing limits on certain high-demand products, there are clear and sobering visual reminders about the gravity and impact of the virus.

But, out of sight and mostly out of the minds of the general public, our Department's correction officers and



corrections professionals have continued to deliver the high quality of safety, security and care for those remanded to our custody by the courts that has made the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department among the best in the country.

For the duration of the pandemic, the Department has utilized a rotating crew of members from a mix of custody and non-custody essential services including Casework, Inmate Legal Services, Custody Assessment, General Counsel, Financial Services, Human Resources, Reintegration, Building and Grounds, Records, IT (Information Technology), the Sheriff's Investigative Division and, of course, our Medical and Food Preparation staff.

Working to insure that the constant operations of the Department's House of Correction and Jail continue running smoothly day and night is our custody staff, which has seamlessly maintained equilibrium through the integration and regular upgrading of the enhanced health and safety protocols that have been established to provide increased protection for inmates, detainees and staff members against the contraction and spread of COVID-19

"When I think about how far we've come during this pandemic, I feel



grateful and appreciative for the men and women who come to work every day amidst this crisis, dealing with all of the emergencies that have occurred at our respective facilities, including positive COVID-19 exposures," said Special Sheriff and Superintendent of the Suffolk County House of Correction Yolanda Smith. "We are blessed as a Department to have staff members who rise to the occasion with professionalism and as a team. I'm honored to work with the correction officers and with non-custody staff who continuously keep raising the bar every day."

According to several officers who are among those responsible for raising that bar and rising to the occasion for what has become the "new normal" during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is a powerful sense of responsibility and pride in their profession that has helped them to meet this challenge.

“Overall, our role as correction officers hasn’t changed that much,” said Officer Lisette Cordero of the Suffolk County Jail. “We’re still coming in and doing the daily things we would normally have to do. There are definitely a few more things specific to the pandemic that we have to do – checking the temperatures of everyone coming into the facility, making sure everyone is wearing masks and gloves, cleaning and decontamination procedures... but, our primary responsibility of making sure that everyone is safe and secure is still the same.”

Echoing Officer Cordero, fellow officers from the House of Correction and Jail also spoke about the heightened communication efforts of the executive staff and the importance of the protection protocols that have been established.

“We’re taking a lot more precautions with everything, from detainees to staff members,” said Suffolk County Jail Officer Jack Brown. “The Department has done a good job of making sure that we have extra protective equipment when needed like masks, goggles, gloves and gowns. We have decontamination teams that go around cleaning everything constantly. We’re screening people coming in for fevers and symptoms. The staff has done a good job of communicating with everyone.”

“There are definitely some things that you have to do differently, like coming in earlier to get our temperatures taken, getting our cleaning supplies in order so that we can help decontaminate and disinfect areas to keep ourselves, our fellow officers, and inmates and detainees safe,” said Officer Ruth Barbosa of the House of Correction. “We’re doing a good job being proactive and taking preventive steps.”

“Everyone here is putting their best foot forward and working together to make sure that everyone has the proper equipment and that we’re taking precautions against infection,” House of Correction Officer Sean Hannon agreed. “We’re constantly developing and implementing new procedures based on the Centers for Disease Control recommendations and the commitment that everyone is showing speaks to how good the officers and staff are.”

While every officer spoke about their commitment, sense of responsibility and pride in carrying out their sworn duties as the necessary motivation in their continued efforts, each expressed appreciation for the people who have made it a point to thank them for their service.

“It can sometimes be a thankless job, but the officers get together and have each other’s backs, giving their best efforts during trying times,” said Officer Hannon. “I did see a video with one of the [New England] Patriots players giving us a shout-out and that’s huge, knowing that people out there are thinking about us.”



“I think that the uncertainty [of the pandemic] and not knowing can create a certain amount of anxiety,” said Officer Cordero, “but, we’re all helping each other out, watching out for each other. And, knowing that people are grateful for the work that we’re doing through these unfortunate circumstances is nice.”

“It’s definitely appreciated,” said Officer Brown. “The command staff thanks us for what we do and the videos of the different people thanking us have been great. We have a job to do and it’s an important one, and we take pride in doing it. But, it’s definitely nice to feel appreciated. It makes the job easier to do.”

Also expressing her gratitude for the members of the public who have voiced their appreciation, Officer Barbosa gave a powerful example of how everyone could best support their efforts.

“One thing that you can do to support us inside is to wear masks or face coverings any time you’re in public, and practice the proper social distancing,” said Officer Barbosa. “I know that there are still some people out there who aren’t taking this seriously, but many of us have older parents and some of us have children that we’re taking care of. All it takes is a single exposure to someone who has COVID-19. What you do out there affects us in here, so it helps us to do our part if you do yours.”

Adding one more voice to the modest chorus of appreciation for the men and women doing the critically important work of the Department during the time of COVID-19 and beyond was Superintendent of the Suffolk County Jail Michael Colwell.

“As we confront the realities of COVID-19 within our facilities, I am struck with profound gratitude and deep appreciation for the staff members who, on a daily basis, courageously face the challenges that await them amidst an ever changing dynamic,” said Superintendent Colwell. “That they have adapted to this environment with such readiness and commitment, has led to our success in managing an event, the likes of which we have never before experienced. These staff members give me great confidence that we are moving to a more stable and certain future, and I am honored to partner with them.”

SHERIFF TOMPKINS OFFERS THANKS FOR GENEROSITY OF PUBLIC DURING COVID-19 CRISIS



With its deadly potency and extreme communicability, the COVID-19 virus has spread into a global pandemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of people, forcing most everyone around the world into protective sheltering protocols in their homes, non-essential businesses and services to suspend operations and schools of both the grade and higher learning varieties to scramble to be able to deliver lessons at home while the world grapples with the anxiety caused by the unprecedented challenge it poses.

Through all of the uncertainty and apprehension, however, there have been many inspiring stories about people coming together to rise to the occasion and give their assistance in whatever way that they can to help their neighbors, local organizations and even strangers to mitigate the fallout caused by the pandemic.

As the Department navigates through this crisis, the necessity for personal protective equipment (PPE) continues to be at the forefront of our mission to keep everyone safe and secure. Over the past few months, we have received several generous donations from many organizations and people out of the kindness in their hearts and concern for the men and women working behind the walls, and for the people in our care and custody.

Recently, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department received a donation of 5,500 professional-grade and hand-made masks from members of the community – including Leonard Lee of Communities Coming Together, Operation LIPSTICK, cut#50,



the Reform Alliance, Sewing COVID-19 (the group that created the hand-made masks), Grace Church of All Nations and Reverend Jeffrey Brown – who united in the cause of providing protective equipment for the people who work in and are remanded to our facilities.

Earlier, the Department received from Caseworker Kenny Pires a donation of 1,000 masks and 300 protective gowns. A friend of Pires' who owns a food packaging company, had been producing PPE on a daily basis and was kind enough to donate some to the Department. Pires, a recent addition to the SCSD, has been a member of law enforcement since 1994.

The Department also received a generous donation of masks from Anthony Seymour of Youth In Crisis, Richard Harding, President of the Green Soul Foundation and Taba Moses, of the Green Soul Community Development Foundation.

Speaking about the thoughtfulness of these and previous donations, Sheriff Tompkins offered effusive praise to everyone for stepping up to help during the crisis.

"I want to express my deepest appreciation for each and every person who, in consideration of the people that work behind the walls and of the people that they care for in our facilities, gave so generously to help keep us safe," said Sheriff Tompkins. "On behalf of everyone at the Department, you have our undying, heartfelt gratitude."



FAMILY MATTERS “PLAY SHOP” BRINGS NURTURING FATHERS TOGETHER WITH THEIR CHILDREN

Earlier this year, the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department’s Family Matters program collaborated with the Nurturing Fathers’ Program of the Family Nurturing Center in an effort to help the men in our custody realize the true value of nurturing and supporting their children while still maintaining authority and structure. Family Matters is a voluntary program under the Division of Re-Integration Services at the Suffolk County House of Correction that is designed to assist inmates and their families with working toward positive relationships. This program is important because of the powerful role families play in supporting, guiding and inspiring currently incarcerated individuals upon their release.

The Nurturing Fathers’ class is a thirteen-week class that teaches the incarcerated men about their children’s needs and how to meet them, all while examining their past personal experiences with their own fathers. With the guidance of their Family Nurturing Center facilitator, John O’Neil, they also learn the importance of serving as their children’s first teacher while they are still impressionable, the power of positive affirmations, and providing a nurturing environment that makes their children feel safe. All of those factors play a significant role in building the foundation for intellectual and social growth. There is also an emphasis on learning how to have and maintain a healthy co-parenting relationship with the mother of their children, regardless of whether they remain in a relationship together.

During the first week of the program, the men reflect on the ways in which they were parented while growing up. They discuss what they remember most about their fathers, and examine how that has influenced their own parenting skills. In the second week, they dive into a conversation about the “Little Boy Within,” which translates to the needs that the men had but did not receive while they were younger, and still yearn to have today as adults. They learn coping skills, and ways to nurture

themselves. Not long ago, the men were on week eight of the program and had their first Family Matters “Play Shop.” Director of Reintegration Karla Acevedo explained that the “Play Shop” is an opportunity for dads going through the Family Matters Program to invite their children to the House of Correction for interactive fun and games. Researchers have observed that when fathers engage in physical play with their children, they mentally challenge and stimulate their child. This interaction positively impacts the child’s learning and skill development, and can influence a child’s ability to manage frustration, explore new activities, and solve problems in a creative way.

During the play shop, the men were able to have dinner with their families, play board games, and also paint on canvas with them. The event was a clear success as evidenced by the children’s extreme excitement about spending time with their fathers. They were even allowed to take a few of the games home with them. Family Nurturing Center facilitator John O’Neil, stated his belief in the idea that “Families, who play together, stay together.”

The collaboration between the Family Matters and the Nurturing Fathers’ programs will continue, with more of these events on the horizon, as soon as it is safe to do so amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Event planners are already aiming to have more families in attendance. With the Play Shop such an unqualified achievement, the Department would like to thank Director Acevedo and her team, and Mr. O’Neil for their hard work and dedication in helping the men in the program to move towards positive, successful futures with their families.



SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT WELCOMES 23 NEW OFFICERS WITH COTA 20-01 GRADUATES

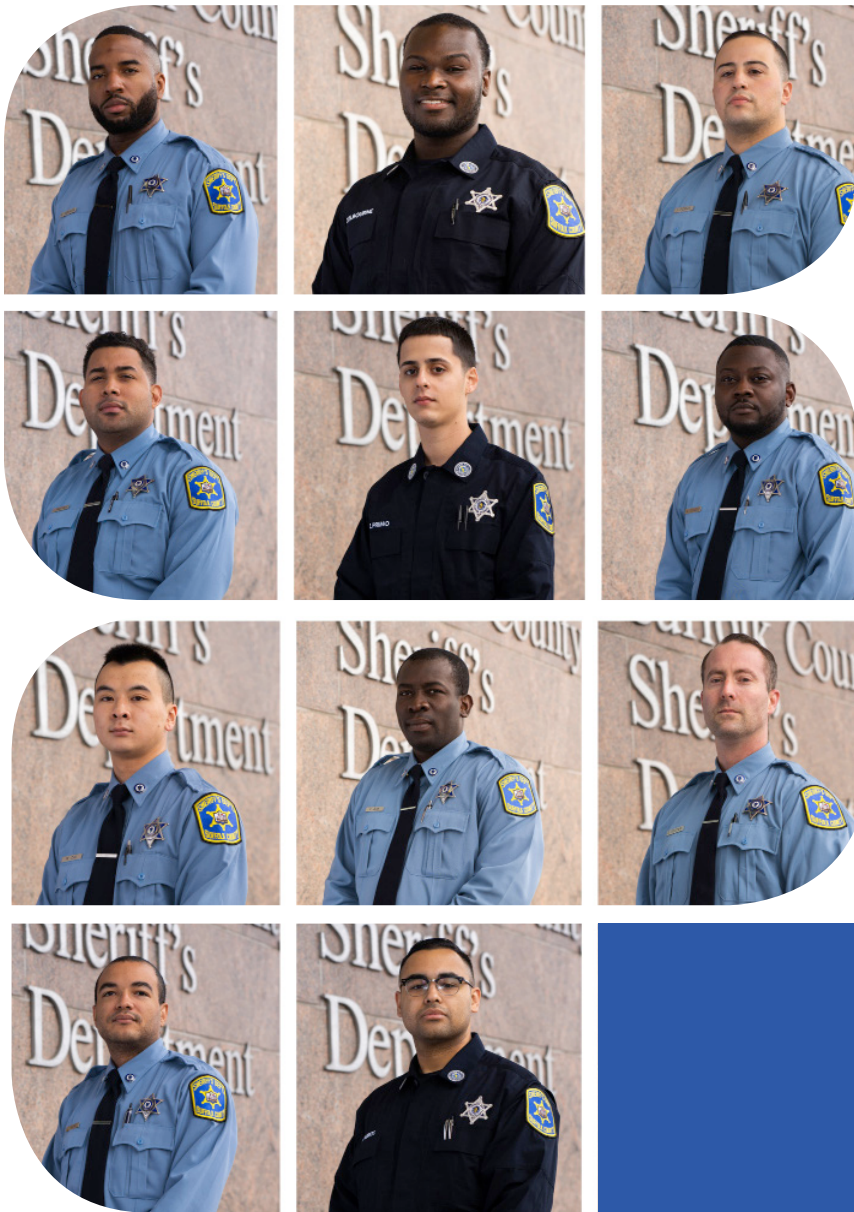
Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently welcomed twenty-three new officers into the Corrections profession. On January 13, 2020, the Chelsea Correction Officer Training Academy (COTA) began the process of transforming the officer trainees into correction officers for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. For twelve weeks, the officer candidates went through a rigorous program in which they dedicated themselves to learning the duties and responsibilities of becoming correction officers for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. The men and women in training spent long hours in the classroom and logged many more in the field as they received academic and physical instruction from the Department's academy instructors.



The candidates chosen to become officers of the Department successfully completed an academy that required intensive instruction in several practical and classroom subjects that included: ethics and professionalism, suicide prevention, the use of force continuum, firearm safety and handling, inmate education and programming, contraband control, courtroom testimony, CORI and inmate rights and responsibilities, fire safety, CPR, harassment and discrimination prevention, cross-gender supervision, and report writing, in addition to several other topics.

On April 8, 2020, the officer candidates were officially sworn-in by Assistant Deputy Superintendent and Director of Training Jose Mojica, Assistant Superintendent William Sweeney, and Suffolk County Jail Superintendent Michael Colwell. In observance of safety protocols related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the officers were not able to have a formal graduation ceremony, however, Department officials expressed to COTA Class 20-01 how proud they are of their accomplishments.





“This class was a good group of officers and worked well together,” stated ADS Mojica. “We were directly affected by the COVID-19 virus, but, fortunately, all of the students were able to complete the necessary requirements and were able to receive their Oath of Office on April 8th. It was a learning experience for each of us, from the academy class members to our most senior cadre of instructors. This was an unprecedented situation and I am proud of how the academy staff and Class 20-01 worked together in order to achieve our goals.”

The members of COTA Class 20-01 are: Josemer Augustin, Michael Casey, Brianna O’Leary, Lorraine Velez, Ronie Robinson, Lino Azul, Khang Lam, Joshua Mojica, John Exantus, Wilfredo Rubert, Djeckby Joseph, Jake Shretawski, William Chu, Jordan Blair, John Posada, Christopher Barros, Alvin Colbourne, Zachary Primo, Clevens Jean, Eric Goodwin, Wisdom Degboe, Baldwin Ihenacho, and Jorge Arredondo.

The COTA Class 20-01 class leaders were: Baldwin Ihenacho as the class President, John Posada as the Vice-President, Brianna O’Leary as the secretary and Eric Goodwin as the treasurer.

Award recipients included: Brianna O’Leary, Drill Instructor Award; Lisa Enos and Jake Shetrawski, Academic Award; Joshua Mojica, Defensive Tactics Award; Jake Shetrawski, Physical Fitness Award; Eric Goodwin, Top Gun Award; and Lorraine Velez, Unit Citation Award.

Sheriff Tompkins and the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department would like to congratulate each of the members of COTA Class 20-01 for working extremely hard and for earning their place within the Department.

