



# COMMON GROUND

JULY 2020 ISSUE



## CONGRATULATIONS, MRS. B!

**A Half-Century Of Service Behind Her,  
Albia Bondar Takes Well-Earned Retirement**



# SHERIFF'S STATEMENT

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## GREETINGS,

In this issue, we celebrate the retirement of one of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's longest-serving employees – Albia Bondar. With the Department for more than fifty years, “Mrs. B.,” as she is affectionately known, has been a part of several administrations; helped to shepherd through the transition from the Deer Island House of Correction to the Suffolk County House of Correction; worked in what was then the Budget Office and is now

the Financial Services Division, which has undergone a multitude of changes and improvements; and she has worked with a number of different sheriffs. I am proud to be able to say that I was one among them who had the opportunity to witness the dedication, commitment, and hard work that she carried with her throughout her long and illustrious career. On behalf of everyone at the Department and those who came before me, I wish Mrs. B. an equally long and happy retirement.

Additionally, we resume our Partner of the Month series in this issue, look in on our Urban Farming Program and check the progress of our current crops, talk about two racial justice and equity panels that I participated in, and preview the upcoming forum with candidates for the United States Senate for our incarcerated population that will be taking place at the House of Correction on July 7th.

I hope that you'll enjoy reading about these topics and more in this edition. I look forward to bringing you more insight and information about the forms and functions of the Department in the issues to come.

-Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

### COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

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# A DEPARTMENT CONSTANT FOR OVER A HALF-CENTURY, "MRS. B." TAKES WELL-EARNED RESPITE IN RETIREMENT

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently celebrated the retirement of its longest serving member, Albia Bondar.

Beginning a career that has spanned an amazing fifty-one years, "Mrs. B." joined the Department in the spring of 1969, arriving by way of a college degree from the University of Massachusetts and a few years working at Stouffer Foods Corporation in Cleveland, Ohio. When she started her job as a Senior Clerk Typist for the Department, Mrs. B. was earning \$2.55 per-hour as one of only two women working at the Deer Island House of Correction at the time.

As one could easily imagine, the Department was a decidedly different place back then, with standards, practices and technology having advanced quite a bit over the decades. As Mrs. B. remembers it, Deer Island possessed certain unique qualities that set it apart from other facilities, even in its own time.

"It was pretty rural," Mrs. B. recalled. "And, the buildings were pretty old. It was like a little community because most of the people running the place lived on the island. We had pheasants, rabbits and other creatures running all over the place. The sunrises and sunsets were beautiful, though."

"I started working part time for 20 hours a week on the island," Mrs. B. continued. "Me and a woman named Shirley were the only two women on the island at the time, and we worked on catching up FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) records because they were two years behind at the time."

Becoming a full-time employee in 1973, Mrs. B. worked in what was called the "front office," sharing a variety of different responsibilities with co-workers which included billing and procurement, staffing the switchboard, managing inmate canteen services and telephone calls, recording and calculating inmate sentencing, and a host of other duties, albeit in a decidedly more painstaking fashion than today's requirements.

"People today have it made," said Mrs. B. "We didn't have a lot of training then. We did a lot of on the job learning. And, you've got computers now, but we used to do everything by hand. We used these big, old ledger books and we had to write in all of the sentences and then, when people were released, we had to write them off in the book the day they left. We used to have envelopes with dimes in them for the people in custody to that I used to distribute so they could make phone calls. They started calling me 'The Money Lady' or 'Mrs. B., but not by my first name.'"



While the work itself was more difficult to carry out by today's standards, there were a host of other challenges that kept Mrs. B. and the other members of the Department on their toes.

Listing some of the more colorful situations that she faced in the earlier days at the Department, Mrs. B. recalled three riots that either forced her to evacuate the island or prevented her from coming to work; a correction officers' strike; floods that washed out the roads; and several blizzards, including the "Blizzard of '78" and another in which her car became embedded in a snow drift as she tried to make her way home. At least on that occasion, said Mrs. B., she had a car to get stuck in a snow bank with.

"There was the time when one of the inmates stole my car," said Mrs. B. "They didn't realize it, but they dropped it off around the corner from my house when they were done with it. I also used to ride my bicycle to work some days and they would take it and ride it around the island."

While thinking back to those incidents relating to her modes of transportation as among the more lighthearted in retrospect, Mrs. B. also spoke about a few of the more serious events.



“It was rough and tough on the island,” Mrs. B. said. “Some of the inmates tore up the physical plant in the segregation unit. We had an officer hit with a baseball bat who needed a plate to be inserted in his skull so that he could survive. There were some inmates that tried to escape by swimming off of the island, but they drowned. We didn’t find them on land until three days later. It’s still certainly a tough profession, but things were really different back then.”

Shifting gears to the present, Mrs. B. spoke about some of the things that she would miss most about working at the Department.

“To tell you the truth, I’m going to miss the people,” Mrs. B. said. “I have some good friendships here with my coworkers. We’ve learned a lot from each other as people. Because of the rich diversity here, I got to learn about making different cultural foods and we’ve shared recipes and plants...I’m going to miss them. But, I’m going to keep in touch with everyone and check in from time to time.”

Though Mrs. B. was unable to have an official “retirement day” at work due to the safety protocols and “stay-at-home” work orders mandated by the COVID-19 pandemic, members of the Department were able to show their appreciation by driving by her house for “Mrs. B. Day” to help her celebrate this latest milestone before she sets her sights on the next ones.

“I have a new granddaughter who is keeping me quite busy,” said Mrs. B., already off to a running start. “I also do a lot of cooking for the family and I have an afghan project that I’ve been wanting to work on. I’ve crocheted the panels, but I haven’t had the time to lay them out into a design until now. I’ve got plants and orchids inside and outside that I have to tend to...I’m going to be keeping busy.”

If the past 51 years are any indication, it’s doubtful that Mrs. B. will be slowing down into her well-earned retirement any time soon.



# PARTNER OF THE MONTH:

## Angela Eberle and Anthony Joseph of “Volunteers of America”

The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department’s “Partner of the Month” series highlights the outside agencies and organizations that are working with us to help improve the lives and increase opportunities for the men and women remanded to our care and custody by the courts. Each month, we will highlight these collaborations between our organizations and shed some light on some of the ways in which we are readying people to reenter their communities better prepared to provide for themselves and their families.

This month’s “Partner of the Month” is actually two partners - Angela Eberle and Anthony Joseph, from Volunteers of America. Angela is the Program Director of Incarcerated Veterans Transition Program and Anthony is the Program Director of Mass Bay Veterans Center. Volunteers of America embodies President Lincoln’s promise to care for those “who shall have born the battle.” Currently there are 18.2 million veterans in the United States according to the latest statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau, and according to the 2018 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, 37,878 veterans experience homelessness each evening. Ninety percent of those experiencing homelessness are men, with an increasing number of women and children now experiencing homelessness.

Angela and Anthony work with the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department to identify veterans who are in our care and provide services to them, whether it be helping to gather their paperwork or obtain housing. When asked what is the most satisfying part of working with veterans, Angela and Anthony stated: “The most satisfying part of the work we do is being able to see the client from their starting point of needing assistance in the capacity of employment, education, housing or daily needs, and watch as they grow and progress as their lives start to come back together. Everyone has a different story and different needs, but in the end watching the clients come out on top and achieve their goals is rewarding.”

The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department understands that not everyone in our care has the same needs, so we try to bring as many resources behind the wall to assist our men and women with getting the help that they need. Angela and Anthony come to the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department once-a-month to meet with veterans and assess their needs.



When asked to identify the most pressing needs that veterans have, Angela stated “The number-one need for the veterans we serve is housing, by far. But, with limited-to-no income, no steady job, lack of education or barriers, such as not having a driver’s license, obtaining housing can be complex. This is why it is so important for the veterans programs and organizations to work together so veterans have access to all the services needed to regain stability in the community, maintain employment and housing after incarceration. Ensuring that veterans use the tools accessible to them and making them aware of the programs and assistance that is out there for them is a key to their success and future moving forward.”

**For more information visit [www.voa.org](http://www.voa.org)**

# SCSD'S URBAN FARM CONTINUES GROWTH AMIDST COVID-19 PROTOCOLS

Along with businesses, educational institutions and organizations across the country, the battle against the COVID-19 pandemic forced the necessary implementation of health and safety protocols around the Department and the postponement of some of the many programs that are provided to our incarcerated population. One program that has continued unabated, however, with new safety guidelines, has been the Urban Farming Program.

Introduced in 2012, the program has quite literally continued growing and thriving, despite the restrictions necessitated by the new protocols.

“It’s growing like crazy,” said Captain David Granese, Director of Vocational Education, through which the Urban Farming Program is facilitated. “We have two men from the program who assist with watering, weeding and planting. Typically, there are about ten people out there at a time, but in observance of COVID-19 protocols, we’ve cut it back to two participants in effort to keep social distancing.”

According to Captain Granese, approximately ninety percent of the plants in the garden were started by seeds under the “grow light” system in the Common Ground Institute, the Department’s



vocational education hub. An impressive array of fruits and vegetables are now soaking in the sun and ripening for harvest, including: Romaine Lettuce, Radishes, Cucumbers, Summer Squash, Zucchini, Eggplant, Green Beans, Basil, Parsley, Tomatoes (Cherry, Yellow Pear, Early Girl, San Marzano) and Peppers (Green, Red, Hot, Jalapeno), in addition to others.

With hopes to begin harvesting lettuce in the coming week, Captain Granese once again stressed the new health and safety standards, stating that, during the harvesting process, masks and gloves will be worn at all times and the harvested items will be placed in a bag, weighted and brought to the SCSD’s Kitchen where one of the Serv-Safe-certified chefs will survey all of the produce to ensure safe consumption. This year, Captain Granese anticipates that a large amount of the produce grown from the garden will be donated, as the Department continues preparing for the reopening of the Culinary Arts Kitchen for programming, where the rest of the harvest will be utilized.





## FATHERS DAY

Father's Day is a day of honoring fatherhood and paternal bonds, as well as the influence of fathers in society. On behalf of Sheriff Tompkins and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, we would like to wish all of fathers, father figures, and grandfathers a Happy Father's Day!





**Steven W. Tompkins**



**Byron Barnett**



**Ayanna Pressley**



**Floreisha Bastien**



**Joe Curtatone**



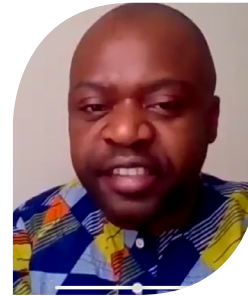
**Yvonne Spicer**



**Rachael Rollins**



**Andre Green**



**Will Mbah**

# SHERIFF TOMPKINS SPEAKS OUT ABOUT RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins recently participated as a panelist in two separate forums held to address racial justice and equality. Spurred by the outcry for justice following the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and other Black and brown people at the hands of law enforcement, these forums were part of the larger discussion about race that is occurring around the nation.

Taking place at Roxbury Community College on the eve of Father's Day, a group of Black men from a diverse array of perspectives, professions and experiences assembled to discuss racism, trauma and the road ahead for racial justice and equality. Among a group that included State Representative Russell Holmes, Boston Police Commissioner William Gross, MBTA Police Chief Kenneth Green, East Boston Neighborhood Health Center President and CEO Manny Lopes and several others, Sheriff Tompkins spoke about the need to reform a system that was never created to deliver justice on an equal footing to everyone.

“When people say to me that the criminal justice system is broken in its entirety, not just policing, and needs to be fixed, I counter by saying the criminal justice system was built to be punitive. It was meant to have outrageous punishments delivered to people who were never considered to be equal in the eyes of society. So, until we change that dynamic it will continue to happen.”

Taking part in another, similar forum - this time occurring virtually among participants - Sheriff Tompkins joined a panel discussion that focused on structural racism, hosted by the City of Somerville and moderated by WHDH Channel 7 News Boston's Byron Barnett. The other panelists featured were: Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley; Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins; Framingham Mayor Yvonne Spicer; Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone; Somerville City Councilor At-Large Will Mbah; Ward 4 Somerville School Committee member Andre Green; and Somerville High School Black Student Union President Floreisha Bastien.

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FOR THIS FORUM FEATURING THE CANDIDATES  
FOR UNITED STATES SENATE  
REPRESENTING

**THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS**



MODERATED BY  
SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF  
STEVEN W. TOMPKINS

U.S. SENATOR  
**EDWARD MARKEY**

U.S. CONGRESSMAN  
**JOSEPH KENNEDY, III**

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