



COMMON GROUND

SEPTEMBER 2020 ISSUE



Sheriff Tompkins Hosts Virtual Youth Summit For Summer Enrichment Alumni

ALSO INSIDE: THE SCSD'S CHOICE PROGRAM, PARTNER OF THE MONTH, AND MORE...

SHERIFF'S STATEMENT



Greetings,

Through decades past and in normal times, the transition from August to September would signal both the ending of summer and the beginning of fall, and a return to school for students from “Pre-K” to colleges and universities. While this is still very much the case, and schools of all educational levels are welcoming the return of classes, it is *how* our students are returning that has become a vastly different

experience, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As students, teachers, faculty and parents grapple with the ongoing realities of virtual learning, in-person health and safety protocols, and hybrid models of the two, we as a society have had to contend with this “new normal” beneath the cloud of uncertainty that has settled over our nation as it struggles with racial and economic inequity and a growing movement for social justice from coast to coast.

Though these and other issues have commanded our attention, with many of us discussing their societal impacts and implications as we work towards their potential solutions, the voices of young people in these conversations have been mostly unheard. To try and help remedy this situation, we at the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department reached out to some of the former members of our annual summer internship – the Summer Enrichment Program – to join us in a virtual “youth summit” to speak about a variety of subjects from their perspectives. You’ll read about some of that event in this issue, and we hope to make a video transcript of the summit available to you in the very near future on our social media platforms.

I hope that you’ll enjoy reading about this, and several other topics in this edition. I look forward to bringing you more insight and information about the form and functions of the Department in the issues to come.

-Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

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INDEX

DEPARTMENT HOSTS YOUTH SUMMIT

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Department welcomed back alumni of our annual internship program, the Summer Enrichment Program, for a virtual discussion about some of the most pressing topics for today’s young people.



PARTNER OF THE MONTH: BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

This month, the Department turns its spotlight on community partner Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Workforce Development Specialist, Carmen Santos.



PEACE UNIT FEATURED IN EMMY AWARD-WINNING FILM

The Department’s P.E.A.C.E. (Positive Energy Always Creates Elevation) Unit was the site of an Emmy Award-winning short film, shot by WGBH and featuring our collaboration with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT BRINGS CHOICE PROGRAM OUTDOORS FOR BOSTON FIRE YOUTH ACADEMY



The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department held an outdoor, socially-distanced presentation of the Choice Program for members of the Boston Fire Youth Academy.

Held at White Stadium in Franklin Park, Assistant Deputy Superintendent Abe Ayuso and Sergeant Holly Nelson delivered a presentation about the meaning behind the "3 C's" (Care, Custody and Control), and spoke with the academy about a variety of topics, including how to become an officer of the Department, the dangers of sexting, the consequences of bullying, peer pressure, guns and violence, and the ramifications of CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information).

"It's important that we continue our outreach to the people of Suffolk County, not in spite of, but especially because of the pandemic," said Chief of External Affairs and Communications Sandy Zamor Calixte. "The pressures and stressors uniquely affecting young people haven't stopped during this public health crisis, in fact, the societal impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has only added to the issues that young people are facing today, so it's critical that programs like Choice remain available."

The Choice Program, which was created for the young people of Suffolk County in 2005, was developed as a guide for Suffolk County school children to help them meet the many challenges that they face on a daily basis.

The Sheriff's Department accomplishes the mission of the Choice Program by sending officers into schools and community centers across Suffolk County to speak with students, and meet their teachers and administrators. Officers in the program, which is designed to encourage children to respect themselves and others while planning for their futures, have all successfully completed 40 hours of required training. This training has prepared the officers to address a number of topics with the children during each one-hour presentation, which include: peer pressure, making good choices, setting goals, self-respect, Civics, bullying and the effects of CORI, among others. While in the classroom, officers provide students with a Choice Brochure, which is available for download on our website at: www.scsdma.org/kids/choice/choicebrochure.pdf.

"Our mission, in addition to the care and custody of the people remanded to us by the courts, is to provide the kinds of programming and services to the residents of Suffolk County that can help to improve our neighborhoods," said Chief Zamor Calixte, "and we intend to continue to deliver on that mission, with strict adherence to the health and safety protocols that are mandated by the pandemic."

SUMMER ENRICHMENT ALUMNI JOIN SHERIFF TOMPKINS, DEPARTMENT FOR YOUTH SUMMIT

Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and members of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently hosted a virtual event for former members of the Department's summer internship program.

Envisioned as a forum through which to discuss the many concerns currently confronting young people, alumni of the Department's Summer Enrichment Program joined Sheriff Tompkins and members of the Department for a "Youth Summit" that delved into such timely topics as education during the COVID-19 pandemic, racial and gender inequality, civic engagement and responsibility, police brutality and the Black Lives Matter movement, among several other issues.

"We felt that it was important to have this discussion with some of our young people, given the complex challenges that they're facing in today's society," said Sheriff Tompkins. "Being a young person trying to navigate through the world is hard enough without the



additional obstacles of a global pandemic and social upheaval ramping-up the degree of difficulty. We wanted to provide both an outlet for discussion and the opportunity to hear directly from our youths about what they felt could and should be done to mitigate some of these issues."

Touching upon racial and economic disparities in educational opportunity, participants of the event discussed the need for better access for people of color and those with fewer economic advantages.



"I feel that there are more opportunities in suburban schools," said Jordan Jackson. "There are more chances to get into good [colleges] from suburban schools, and it's a better look when you apply."

"There is a [big] difference between private schools and public schools," Gabriella Vecchio agreed. "If you can't afford to send your kids to a private school at a young age, your child starts at a huge disadvantage that just continues to build by the time you get to college."

Echoing her fellow alumni, Lani Stevens said, "I think one of the biggest things we as a society need to work on is education reform. We need to address the disparities between Black and brown people and white people. We also need to address the rising cost of higher education, because it's a huge barrier to a lot of people."

Seizing on the issue of racial inequality, summit participants sounded off on the Black Lives Matter movement, the peaceful protest attempted by former National Football League quarterback Colin Kaepernick, and the unrest stemming from the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and others.

"I went to the early protests in the [Boston] Commons. It was a good turnout and it was peaceful," Latiqua Gamble, said, dispelling the attempt by some to judge most peaceful protesters by the actions of a few. "Violence and looting is a bad idea and gives off the wrong impression. I don't agree with destroying

things in our own community, because we ultimately need those resources.”

“Over the summer, I’ve watched people protesting against police brutality and noticed how different cities have handled it,” said Angel Mojica. “I know that people have seen the viral videos of police marching



alongside protesters and I think that if we had more of that sense of unity, we could accomplish more. Juxtaposing that with the National Guard recently being called in to Portland, I think it’s only added fuel to fire.”

Speaking about a similar contrast in styles of protest, Attiya Nurse noted, “What Kaepernick did at the time was a bold move, putting his career on the line. I don’t know if the NFL apology is real or not, but what he was doing was a peaceful protest. The media portrayal of it needs to change, because [in light of] what’s happening today, it makes people see that maybe peaceful protest wasn’t that bad.”

During one of the more poignant moments of the discussion, Eddie Diaz spoke about his struggle to overcome discrimination on multiple fronts in order to pursue his dream profession.

“I’ve always wanted to be an officer in the military,” said Eddie. “I’ve had to overcome a couple of obstacles along the way. The first is that I am Hispanic. The other is that I am also gay. It’s tough, because I know that the military has a ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy but, I’m an honest, truthful person, and at the end of the day, when push comes to shove when we’re on the battlefield, it doesn’t matter what I am. I want you to know that I’m going to be the person who is going to save you. I’ve got your back. And, I want to know that you’re going to be there to have mine.”

Continuing on the theme of employment equity, several SEP alumni spoke about ways in which to

bridge the existing gaps that persist for women and people of color.

“It seems like, as Black people, we are always fighting for ourselves,” said Tattiana Anderson. “We can’t depend on other people to help bring us up and we can’t wait. I know a lot of entrepreneurs who are making lives for themselves and their offspring. It’s becoming less about what school you went to or who you know. We’re starting to depend less and less on other people [for our careers].”

“I think it’s important for people to become more involved in finance to better understand how it works for them,” said Samantha Harrington. “I want to start a nonprofit that teaches financial literacy. Some of the things that have interested me are ESG [Environmental, Social and Governance] funds. These funds only invest in companies that are environmentally conscious or socially conscious. There is a lot of power in this, because they can invest in companies that support social justice and other important issues, and avoid companies that [have problems with] social justice or racism.”

Ultimately, said one of the participants, racism, sexism and discrimination of all kinds must be confronted for society to realize positive progress.

“It is very important to condemn racism in all of its forms,” Megan Nguyen said emphatically. “Our future leaders will be politicians, police officers, surgeons, lawyers and engineers. We cannot continue to have racist people in our system. We have to continue to inform people and work to change the minds of the people who are still not aware of racial injustice and people who are not actively condemning it or who are not advocating for marginalized people and Black people.”





PARTNER OF THE MONTH

Carmen Santos

of Brigham and Women's Hospital

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.

In this installment of our "Partner of the Month" series, we feature Carmen Santos who is the Workforce Development Specialist from Brigham & Women's Hospital. Brigham & Women's Hospital's Workforce Development is a part of Organizational Effectiveness in their Human Resources Department. The team is comprised

of professionals with experience in career and education coaching, youth employment and community relations. Carmen attends information sessions with the men and women here at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department who have completed Job Readiness training with our Workforce Development Manager Maia Porter, who then refers them to Carmen for a three-month apprenticeship with Brigham & Women's Hospital, that could potentially lead to full-time employment with them.

When asked why workforce development is so important to young people, Carmen said, "Along with the members of our community, Brigham & Women's Hospital aims to primarily engage our entry-level and middle-skilled workforce through various Workforce Development initiatives. We provide them with the support and tools they need to achieve their full personal and professional potential as a means to build the next generation of healthcare workers."

She also stated that, "It is our mission to engage our incumbent workforce by providing the support and tools needed to succeed in fulfilling their personal, professional, and educational potential. We try to provide the youth of our community with opportunities for exposure to careers in healthcare, and an introduction to the world of work through employment experiences."

When asked why certain positions like medical assistant, culinary and transportation jobs are important to the healthcare field, Carmen replied that, "By developing learning and employment opportunities that are aligned with ongoing recruitment needs, we aim to provide the apprentice with as much hands-on experience in their chosen training field, and to health care professionals as possible, so that they thoroughly understand the hospital environment."

For more information about Brigham & Women's Hospital Apprenticeship program contact:
csantos10@partners.org.

EMMY AWARD RECOGNIZES WGBH DOCUMENTARY FEATURING SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, MIT COLLABORATION



The Boston/New England Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences recently gave an Emmy Award to a short documentary made by WGBH and featuring a collaboration between the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

Filmed at the Suffolk County House of Correction, the documentary captures the class discussion that took place between members of the MIT Prison Education Program and the in-custody participants of the Department's P.E.A.C.E. Unit Program.

The P.E.A.C.E. (Positive Energy Always Creates Elevation) Program is designed for sentenced males ages 18 to 25, and provides culturally responsive programming and training that is uniquely designed to address the needs of that particular age group.

As revealed by numerous reports and research about emerging adults, this age cohort typically possesses a lower level of maturity in judgment and less emotional acuity than older adults, as their reasoning skills and impulse control is still developing. The goal is to help these young men to learn how to begin making better and more mature decisions and, ultimately, to begin to break the cycle of incarceration by focusing on education, job training and developing skillsets, individual/group counseling, attitudinal changes and conflict resolution.

Winning the Emmy in the "Education and Schools" category, the documentary gives viewers an inside look at the frank and, at times, emotional discussion

that took place between members of the P.E.A.C.E. Unit and ten students from MIT, led by Lee Perlman, lecturer and co-director of The Educational Justice Institute at MIT (TEJI).

"I am deeply grateful to the New England Chapter of the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences for recognizing the importance of educational and rehabilitative programming in correctional settings," said Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins. "I also want to thank MIT and TEJI for their efforts as one of our committed community partners who are working with the men and women who are remanded to our care and custody by the courts. I want to give special thanks to WGBH for devoting their attention and resources to covering this important issue."

"Programs like our P.E.A.C.E. Unit, and the multitude of additional programming that we make available to our incarcerated population, were created to provide the kinds of skill-based, trauma-informed and rehabilitative services that can help to successfully return people back to our communities with the ability to better care for themselves and their families, thus contributing to the wellbeing and vibrancy of our society."

To learn more about the P.E.A.C.E. Unit and the many programs of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, visit: www.scsdma.org. You can watch the documentary on www.WGBH.org at: www.wgbh.org/programs/2019/11/26/redemption-mits-prison-education-program.



**SHERIFF STEVEN W. TOMPKINS &
THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT**
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