



# COMMON GROUND

AUGUST 2024 ISSUE



A HEARTFELT FAREWELL & THANK YOU TO  
**MICHAEL COLWELL**  
FOR HIS 33 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE SCSD



# SHERIFF'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 2024

Greetings,

Welcome to a new edition of Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's *Common Ground* newsletter. In this issue, we shine a spotlight on the retirement of Suffolk County Jail Superintendent Michael Colwell, who has devoted thirty-three years of service to the Department. We extend our heartfelt goodbyes and gratitude to Superintendent Colwell for his unwavering commitment and exemplary service.

We also celebrate the appointment of José Mojica as the new Suffolk County Jail Superintendent. After a distinguished career as the Assitant Deputy Superintendent at the Training Division, Mojica steps into his new role with great promise. We look forward to the auspicious journey ahead for the SCSD community under Superintendent Mojica's leadership.

As many of our readers are aware, the core mission of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department is to ensure the safe care and custody of individuals remanded to our facilities. This July, the SCSD commemorates the individuals in our Suffolk County Jail custody who have successfully completed Roca's intensive three-week program.

This issue also marks the introduction of our Summer Enrichment Program Class of 2024. We warmly welcomed all of our new participants who aspire to work in law enforcement and the greater criminal justice field. Over the duration of the last month, participants have engaged in various instructive courses, with insight to expand professional growth. In addition to sharing news of Superintendent Colwell's retirement and Superintendent Mojica's promotion, we offer a glimpse of the recent community happenings 'Around Suffolk County' that the SCSD has engaged with.

I hope that you'll enjoy reading these and other stories in this issue, and I look forward to bringing you more insight and information about the form and functions of the Department in the editions to come.

- Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

## COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

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# INDEX



## CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP: FAREWELL SUPERINTENDENT COLWELL

A tribute to Superintendent Michael Colwell's remarkable thirty-three-year career and his impact on the Suffolk County Jail.



## CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP: CONGRATULATIONS SUPERINTENDENT MOJICA

Introducing José Mojica as the new Suffolk County Jail Superintendent and his vision for the future of the Department.



## MEET THE 2024 SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

Meet the 2024 Summer Enrichment Program participants and explore their aspirations in law enforcement.

## AROUND SUFFOLK COUNTY

Highlights from recent community events, including the Boston Celtics Championship Parade, the "Scoops and Hoops" Tournament, a Roxbury Court Conversation, and local jazz performances at the Suffolk County House of Correction.

# A FAREWELL TO SUPERINTENDENT MICHAEL COLWELL

## Superintendent Colwell Reflects on His Journey Within The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department



As Superintendent of the Suffolk County Jail Michael Colwell steps down from his esteemed position, we reflect on a distinguished career spanning over thirty-three years of dedicated service and unwavering commitment to honest law enforcement. His journey throughout the SCSD is a testament to his exceptional leadership, professionalism, and profound impact on the correctional community. Before his departure, he sat with the Communications and External Affairs Division to share some final remarks on the job.

At the age of 22, Superintendent Colwell entered the workforce as a Jail Officer at the height of change. The Department had just undergone a facility transition, opening the Nashua Street location in place of the old Charles Street Jail. In came modernization, and with it many adjustment difficulties.

Said Superintendent Colwell, *“It was a time of transition... where jail and prison overcrowding was common, and so there were also challenges in that.”*

When asked how he has seen the Jail adapt throughout his tenure, Superintendent Colwell responded:

*“Over the thirty-three years, the Jail has evolved exponentially in terms of largely being a warehouse for human beings... I think we have [now] oftentimes taken the lead in a more thoughtful process in how we deal with people who are in the criminal justice system – and it’s been exciting to be on the lead of that curve... and rewarding to see that the work that we do is not just, say, detention and separation from society, but to invest in the people who are here to return them to society.”*

Willingness to embrace and inspire change would be the marked quality of Superintendent Colwell’s revered legacy. Demonstrating a natural aptitude for leadership, he quickly ascended the ranks, serving as Sergeant, Lieutenant, Captain, and serving as a Shift Commander, absorbing the lessons of each experience as he passed upward.

*“It was really a journey of exploration... of learning more and more about the Department’s responsibilities. Sometimes as a new employee, you only see your role – and as my career grew, I was able to see it from the organization’s role and the responsibilities that we have to the public,”* Said Supt. Colwell.

While serving as a Lieutenant, Superintendent Colwell received advanced training in the principles of direct supervision at the U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections in Longmont, CO. He also completed instruction in the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center’s Incident Command System and participated in the Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association Education & Training Council’s (MSAETC) Train the Trainer program. His expertise in these areas led to his role as a guest speaker at MSAETC conferences, where he shared his knowledge on industry-relevant topics. Since 2005, Superintendent Colwell has been an integral part of the Training Division, creating and delivering courses for new supervisors that expand on peer management. His commitment to training and professional development has prepared countless officers for leadership roles within the Department.

One of Superintendent Colwell’s notable achievements includes his technical support and assistance during the filming of MSNBC’s documentary program *Lockup: Extended Stay: Boston in 2011*. His involvement in this high-profile project showcased his expertise and the acumen of the Suffolk County Jail. In his role, Superintendent Colwell also contributed significantly to the Human Resources Division, participating in the screening of new correction officer applicants and serving on command staff promotional interview panels for neighboring county Sheriff’s departments and the Massachusetts Department of Correc-

tion (DOC). As the Suffolk County Jail's point of contact for the Massachusetts DOC Standards & Compliance Division, his part was critical in ensuring the facility's adherence to evolving laws and regulations. His efforts were instrumental in achieving a near-perfect compliance rating during a comprehensive national accreditation effort by the American Correctional Association in 2016, a testament to his meticulous attention to detail and dedication to excellence.

For the last five years as Superintendent, Michael Colwell maintained his deep devotion to the principles of justice and rehabilitation, strengthening this commitment forged in his early years.

Reflecting on his accomplishments, he noted, *"I am heartened by the fact that I have been able to mentor new employees into the industry and do so in a way that they're able to continue the good work of the Department... and for the mission in which rehabilitation and restoration is really our focus."*

Superintendent Colwell shared his pride for the Suffolk County Jail in facilitating programs such as detainee education for inmates, which has recently reopened after more than a decade saying *"It was particularly meaningful... providing opportunities for those disconnected from education previously to reconnect to those opportunities."*

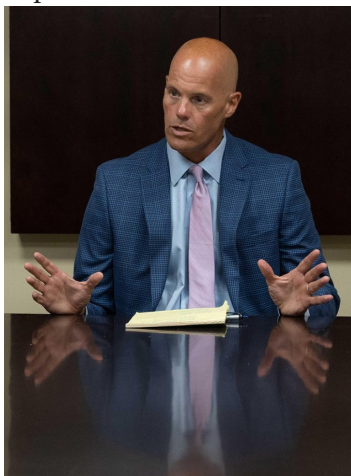
Furthermore, Superintendent Colwell has helped spearhead the efficiency of Suffolk County's corrective justice initiatives through the creation of a regional holding facility in partnership with the City of Boston's Police Department, Massachusetts State Police, Chelsea, Revere, and Winthrop police departments, and university police departments. He explained, *"To go to a police station is largely to sit in a holding pen. Because we are experienced in the housing and treatment of people and assessing their needs immediately, we have program services such as social services and medical infrastructure here"* that are largely a benefit to those detained. On the upcoming collaboration with Boston Medical Center to provide behavioral health services, Superintendent Colwell shared his aspirations for the program, proclaiming, *"We hope that this is going to inspire a change within the industry of truly looking at people in the system to address what their needs are."*

He continued: *"Somehow, we so normalize human captivity as a government function... There's a lot of distrust in government and public safety – and a lot of that is earned and deserved – so the Boston Medical Center [partnership] is really exciting... if we can establish a connection with the folks in custody to really reinforce with them that we're not here to harm; we're here to heal."*

On the subject of change, Superintendent Colwell spoke about the strength of the SCSD community in bending to the winds of change brought by COVID-19 that would have otherwise broken it. Under his leadership and expertise, the Jail was able to maintain and successfully navigate the daily operations under the looming threat of a global pandemic, projected to effect fatal catastrophes across national corrections institutions.

*"Healthcare across the service sector post-pandemic has dealt industries across the nation a real challenge. In navigating that, we try to always remember the hardships that bring our workforce and families behind them."* He continued, *"The pandemic inspired a lot of changes in the correction industry, one which is [historically] resistant to change because it is centuries old and is largely not informed by outside eyes and voices – so, the pandemic forced us and all of our public safety partners to embrace so many different methods that we would not have thought of."* For example, virtual court engagements have proven to be both a resource of more efficient means to inmates, officers, and appointed legal staff alike.

Superintendent Colwell closed his remarks on his tenure by crediting that same civilian and uniform staff for the persistent professionalism they exhibit. While his tenure can be characterized by the pursuit of excellence, innovation, and fidelity to the welfare of both inmates and staff, he attributes his success to the integrity and outstanding compassion of his SCSD team.



As he steps down, his influence will undoubtedly continue to shape the future of the Suffolk County Jail and the broader correctional community. As we bid farewell to Superintendent Colwell, we extend our deepest gratitude for his service and wish him all the best in his future endeavors.

In his parting words, Superintendent Colwell shared: *"This job has taught me that people should not be defined by titles or circumstances but by their willingness to help others and better themselves. It is a willingness across the leadership to be available to the people that we serve — that we are public advocates and we need to maintain availability and the fruits of that transparency."*

We congratulate Superintendent Colwell on his well-earned retirement and look forward to seeing how he will continue to influence and support the field of corrections in his future endeavors.



## EMPLOYEE PROFILE: CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW JAIL SUPERINTENDENT, JOSE MOJICA!

With a career spanning nearly three decades, the newly appointed Superintendent of the Suffolk County Jail, José Mojica, could not be more qualified nor more deserving to fill the shoes of his predecessor. The legacy of Superintendent Colwell's commitment to the betterment of staff and detainee wellbeing lives on through the uniquely dedicated perspective that Superintendent Mojica brings to this promotion, forged through his wealth of experience and insight into the inner workings of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. This much was clear after the earnest conversation he shared with the Communications and External Affairs Division.

Superintendent Mojica began his journey with the Department on July 5th, 1995, as a Jail officer. Reflecting on his early years, he fondly recalls working alongside a partner, who provided invaluable mentorship and learning opportunities. Over the years, he has embraced various roles – including Central Control, Visitors Lobby, Booking, and Transportation – acquainting himself with all manner of law enforcement.

*“Every opportunity that I was able to say ‘yes’ to, I took it,”* he shared, emphasizing the importance of being open to learning. Offering this advice to the incoming officers he mentors, Superintendent Mojica continued, *“Situational awareness is really important, and not just with the job itself, but with your colleagues [and the environment] you’re working with. We have a lot of different units here and they work slightly differently, so familiarize*

*yourself [with] those specific areas and try to be the best at it... You have to have the willingness and the open-mindedness to learn.”*

His commitment to growth and excellence led him to the Correction Officer Training Academy in Chelsea in 2000, where he became a full-time instructor in 2004. His zeal did not go unnoticed, and in 2013, he took over as the Assistant Deputy Superintendent and Director of Training, a role he held for 11 years until his recent promotion to Jail Superintendent. Said Mojica, *“You have to be proactive in affording those opportunities to yourself.”* Expanding on the opportunities for enrichment that the SCSD provides its staff, Superintendent Mojica shared his intent to collaborate with Jail Assistant Superintendent Leteya Flambo and Assistant Deputy Superintendent Christopher Buckley on strengthening the succession plan for leadership positions paved by Superintendent Colwell.

*“I’m a big fan of [National Football League Coach] Bill Belichick’s ‘Next Man Up’ theory, that if somebody leaves, hopefully somebody else could come in and adequately perform the job function.”* As Director of Training, Superintendent Mojica applied that philosophy, cross-training the nine full-time instructors of the Academy in multiple disciplines to ensure the provision of efficient instruction.

In his new role, Superintendent Mojica approaches leadership with a sense of both pride and humility.

*“I’m proud to be the first Latino in the history of this Department to be in this position,”* he remarked. As a bilingual Puerto Rican descendant and Chelsea native, Superintendent Mojica values the shared culture of his fellow SCSD team, stating that *“diversity – whether culturally or [pertaining to] gender – I’m a big advocate for.”* This commitment to diverse representation in law enforcement rings true beyond his assigned duty. Superintendent

Mojica is a member of both National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) and the Massachusetts Latino Police Officers Association, among other groups.

*“All these different organizations that are pro-law enforcement and pro-civics have a lot of professionals that you can learn from. I consider myself a professional student. I’m always willing to learn.”* Regarding learning, Superintendent Mojica's vision for the future improvement of the Suffolk County Jail extends beyond the officers to the population they serve. He aims to implement programs like cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training, commercial driver's license (CDL) programs, and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification for the inmates under his custody, despite the difficulty of providing enrichment strategies for short-turnaround individuals – the majority of whom are housed between an average of seven and sixty days. His other immediate priorities include ensuring the safety and well-being of both the inmates and the staff, providing necessary tools of support for employees and local law enforcement agencies staffing the Department's central lock-up program, and securing a partnership agreement with the Boston Medical Center behavioral health and substance use recovery unit.

As Superintendent of Security and Operations, his new responsibilities include overseeing the day-to-day operations of the Jail facility. Maintaining the efficiency and effectiveness of the Jail's performance includes the provision of mental health programs such as substance care recovery programs, and professional development strategies, including task force post-certified yearly standards, peace officer training certified by the state, implementing Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations (CMRs), and more. With a strong team by his side, Superintendent Mojica is poised to lead the Suffolk County Jail into a new era of excellence and innovation.

# SUMMER'S IN SESSION! MEET THE 2024 SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS



As another July rolls in, we are thrilled to welcome the 2024 participants of the Summer Enrichment Program! This year's cohort has already showcased a genuine enthusiasm for understanding the law enforcement industry and exploring potential career paths. Their aptitude and eagerness to learn promises a memorable summer ahead, complete with tours of our facilities, meetings with prominent division heads, hands-on training programs, and much more.

## HEAR FROM PARTICIPANTS ABOUT THEIR PASSIONS TO BE EXPLORED WITHIN THE SCSD



### JA'NYAH

*"I'm looking forward to understanding how the law plays out to find an outlet for my voice to be heard. I want to contribute to the way things are done in my community... because there are things that I see that need change. I want to be a part of that change."*

Ja'nyah is a young scholar and advocate for marginalized minority groups, keen on joining a historically black college or university in the South. She expresses an affinity for advocacy work that upholds civilrights for people of color. Ja'nyah anticipates that the Summer Enrichment Program will shed light on how to work within the legal system when representing the Black community in her future career journey.



### AVA

*"I can see myself working in child endangerment or abuse centers because I want to help children. I've seen a lot of cases that have gone wrong, and I want to be able to express my opinion on it."*

Ava is devoted to future mentorship as a caseworker for Child Protective Services or as a victim witness advocate serving domestic violence survivors.

With plans on attending college, Ava is most excited to visit Tufts University through the upcoming field trip speaker event. She reckons that the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department will elucidate her on the programs provided to protect at-risk individuals.



### EVAN

*"Ever since I was a kid, I've always wanted to be a cop. I grew up watching police shows when I was young. I still enjoy Chicago PD and other programs like that."*

Evan is intent on joining the police force as an adult, following in the footsteps of his cousins and retired uncle, Corporal Robert Conolly of the first Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's K-9 Division. Intent on studying the "ins" and "outs" of law



### SADLEY

*"When I was young, I had this computer toy that would sing songs. With my Dad's screwdriver, I would take it apart to see how the circuits work. When it would break, I would put it back together and change the way it sounded. Technology has been my passion ever since because it allows me to bring what's in my head into reality."*

Inspired by his father, Correction Officer Sadrac Daguerre of the Suffolk County House of Correction, Sadley joined the program to learn more about how his academic interests align with the many facets of law enforcement.

Sadley is most looking forward to visiting the Federal Bureau of Investigation and connecting with potential contacts for internship opportunities, especially as they regard cyber security. He aspires to study computer science and engineering at colleges such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Wentworth Institute of Technology, or Worcester Polytechnic Institute.

# AROUND SUFFOLK COUNTY



## SCSD TRIUMPHS AT THE SCOOPS AND HOOPS TOURNAMENT

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Basketball Team, led by Deputy Thomas Maguire as their reigning coach, triumphed in the twenty-third Annual "Scoops and Hoops" Basketball Tournament against the City of Boston Police Department. Hosted by the anti-violence nonprofit organization Youth in Crisis, the game took place at Ryan Playground in Mattapan on July 20th. This friendly – but competitive – game was teeming with tenacity and spirited grit. We congratulate Tom Maguire, Tony Lee, Corry Carter, Jason Francis, Jamaal Brooks, and Antonio Jones (the players of our SCSD team) who played valiantly on the court, claiming the Golden Basketball trophy for our Department. SCSD is eager to engage with Boston's united police force at upcoming recreational events.

## SCSD ASSISTS IN CELTICS CHAMPIONSHIP CELEBRATION

When Boston brings home the trophy, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department celebrates! Members of the SCSD team shared memories of their attendance at the jubilant Celtics championship parade, commemorating the players' 2024 National Basketball Association (NBA) championship win. As this marks the Celtics' eighteenth championship title – ending a sixteen-year title drought and reaffirming the Boston Celtics as the highest record-holding champions in NBA history – New England fans naturally flocked to display their support in droves.

In service to the over one million parade attendees lined across Boston's busiest streets, SCSD partook in the festivities while diligently attending to the order and safety of the community. Our deputies assisted the "rolling rally" of our hometown champs from TD Garden, past City Hall, and through to Copley Square, by providing two transport vans, per the request for mutual aid to bolster the city's law enforcement and ensure first responders' staffing of the parade. Congratulations to the winning team, and thank you to those who served on that day to see to the protected passage of our titled victors.



## A ROXBURY COURT CONVERSATION

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department participated in a "Partnership Meet & Greet Lunch" at the Roxbury Division of the Boston Municipal Court through the invitation of Chief Probation Officer Susan Conrad. The day was ripe with conversations across all sides of the criminal justice system, with participants including Roxbury Trial Court Judge David Breen, the Roxbury Probation Team, Suffolk County District Attorney's Office staff members, and the Suffolk County Office of Community Corrections. SCSD associates shared in meaningful discussions about the importance of diverse perspectives and collaboration facilitated through services such as the Roxbury Trial Court "CHOICE" Program, and the Trial Court Commonwealth of Massachusetts Treatment Center. In one particularly memorable exchange, Thomas Koonce, the Director of the Reentry ("VFTF") and Violence Prevention Program and cofounder of the Restorative Justice Group (Transformational Prison Project), spoke to the group on strengthening reentry and at-risk youth advocacy initiatives, as a formerly incarcerated citizen himself. The SCSD team is pleased to learn from other local activists and law enforcement staff in Suffolk County, bolstering existing and future cooperation that informs our custody care practices along the way.

## SCSD WELCOMES JAZZ MUSIC FOR THE SOUL

Local Boston musicians joined forces to share their talents for the enjoyment of Suffolk County House of Correction inmates and staff alike. On April 12th, the Berklee Global Jazz Institute (BGJI) recited its musical arrangements to the detainees as part of its Outreach Program. Following this performance, the House of Correction hosted further ensemble presentations at the third Annual South Bay Jazz Festival on June 14th. Sponsored by JazzBoston, a valued partner of Sheriff Tompkins and the Department, two bands performed their separate sets for the roughly 100 female and male detainees in attendance in the contact visiting area, accompanied by pizza. As an avid jazz aficionado, Sheriff Tompkins helps promote JazzBoston's music through these festivals, inspiring grant opportunities that support the organization's musicians. Special thanks to SCSD Security Specialist and JazzBoston Board member Parris Battle for ensuring the success of this event, as well as the Massachusetts Cultural Council for providing crucial funding. We anticipate another spirited turnout at the upcoming South Bay Jazz Festival on November 15th.





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



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