



SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT



COMMON GROUND



FATHERS' UPLIFT: EMPOWERING & ADVOCATING





SHERIFF'S MESSAGE

AUGUST 2025

Welcome to the August edition of the Common Ground Newsletter.

In this issue, we share highlights from two recent Fathers' Uplift graduation ceremonies that took place on July 24th. Participants were honored for their growth and achievements throughout the program, which offers therapy, advocacy,

and workforce development to help fathers overcome emotional trauma and substance use disorder. This program empowers them to take on active, positive roles in their children's lives and work towards long-term family stability.

We also are announcing two exciting new developments here at the Department with the introduction of our Podcast Program initiative for residents at the House of Correction, and the redesign of our *Safety Tips for Kids Coloring and Activity Book* for the youngest members of our Suffolk County communities.

In addition, we bring you an employee profile with one of our longest-serving members, and also highlight the exemplary work of our staff with our Officer of the Month feature.

I hope that you'll enjoy reading about these and other topics in this edition, and 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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FATHERS' UPLIFT MARKS MILESTONE WITH LATEST COHORT GRADUATION.



In the Richard Pacitti Reentry and Transitional Center, a group of graduating fathers broke bread together—or rather egg rolls—in celebration of their progress and self-betterment. July 24th marked the graduation of the newest Fathers' Uplift cohort, a 12-week program designed to help incarcerated men overcome the generational trauma and emotional barriers that have impacted their parental role through therapeutic and workforce development services. As the nation's first mental health and substance use treatment facility for fathers and families, Fathers' Uplift provides Suffolk County House of Correction participants with reentry support pre- and post-release, with the mission to foster family stability and community empowerment.

For Louis, who voluntarily completed the program twice, the lessons learned will last far beyond his time inside. "This program has helped reinforce my notions of what patience should be. Patience takes patience," he said, smiling. "When I get home, I'll be a stronger father for it."

Fellow graduate Grant added to how the course reshaped his self-perception. "I think this program has taught me that I'm a role model, and it's helped me highlight my strengths," he explained, speaking to his newfound confidence as an emotionally regulated man and mentor for incoming participants who may struggle with initial hesitation. He continued: "I feel like a lot of times we just

look at our weaknesses... This helped me realize how resilient I am and to look at life from a more positive view, which has made me more of a leader, not only in my household, but even amongst men on my unit."

The core pillars of the program include emotional literacy, relationship building, and practical rehabilitation skills. In a conversation with new Client Financial Counselor Samantha Al-



len, the success of the program was attributed to the mutual respect fostered between participants and counselors, given their shared lived experience. "It's about connection, being personable and relatable to them, building a bond by establishing similarities. We use motivational interviewing and the Managing Emotions curriculum to help them recognize feelings beyond anger, something many have never been taught."

Youth Coach Rodney Dalzon, who has lived through incarceration and now devotes himself to helping others who walk his path, said that authenticity is key. "I've been through that before. It's easy for me to relate to and talk to them. A lot of what's being taught out there is fluff. What's needed are practical things that are actual-

ly going to help them when they get released."

That authenticity has led to deep trust. Dalzon recalled a moment that underscored the program's impact: "A man who graduated came to see us the day after he got out. That told me everything—that the work we're doing here matters and that these relationships don't end at graduation."

Participants say the program's safe, judgment-free environment allows them to speak openly, something typically discouraged by the inmate culture of carceral environments. As one father described, "A lot of times we keep down personal feelings so much, so that we do not know it's bottled up inside us... Men grew up in households where they were told as boys not to express certain emotions. 'Don't cry.' It takes a lot more vulnerability and a lot more power to break down those barriers." To this truth, Grant emphasized, "Even if it's not for you, take that first step. Who knows what's on the other side of that door—nine times out of ten, it's not what you think."

As the graduates posed for photos and shook hands, the celebration carried a shared understanding: this wasn't the end of the work, but the beginning of applying it outside these walls. In the words of one graduate, "I'm not perfect. I'm learning every day, just like my kids. I want them to learn from what I've been through, so that I may be a better father than the one I had been for them."



SCSD WELCOMES NEW SEP COHORT

MEET A FEW PARTICIPANTS



TINA KPODAR

Tina is a student at Roxbury Prep who plans to attend Northeastern University to study Psychology and Criminal Justice. She hopes to gain a deeper understanding of Law Enforcement and our Government's System after completing our program.

Adja is a senior at Revere High School and plans to join the Army after graduation, with the goal of eventually transitioning to the Air Force. She is looking to explore various career paths during our program.

Both participants are excited to learn more about Law Enforcement and gain insights into public safety and the various opportunities it offers.



ADJA SORE

This summer, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department welcomed students from Revere, Winthrop, East Boston, and South Boston to our paid internship Summer Enrichment Program (SEP). Many of the participants applied for this enriching opportunity to gain insights into law enforcement, criminal justice, public safety, and



the workings of our criminal legal system, while exploring various career paths and building connections through networking.

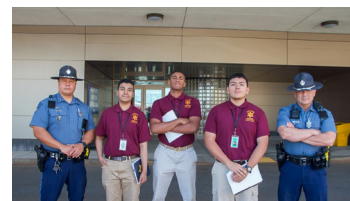
Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins created and launched the SEP in 2014 to foster a bridge between our youth and law enforcement, helping them understand and connect with this field. Since last year, we have introduced several educational components that enhance the learning experience for SEP participants while also developing new skills.

These components include leadership training, cognitive development (Mind Boost) classes, civics & street law, and financial



literacy.

This year's program, led and organized by Community Outreach and Youth Programs Coordinator Lucretia Goodson, has been successful during its first five weeks. Students have had the opportunity to visit many sites and learn directly from professionals in law enforcement. Notable visits included the FBI Headquarters, the Air Force, the State Police, the Revere Fire and Police Departments, the Winthrop Harbormaster Department, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, Suffolk County District Attorney's Office, and the Tufts University Police Department.



As the program progresses, participants will continue to explore more sites and engage with additional guest speakers and leaders in the field from our Department and other agencies. We look forward to celebrating the program's completion and their graduation on August 22nd.

Advice From SEP Instructors:

"Motivation beats intelligence—care enough, do your best, and failure won't define you."

"You're never too young to make an impact. Speak up, get involved, and help shape the world around you."



TOO HOT TO IGNORE: PUBLIC SAFETY IN THE AGE OF URBAN HEAT

It's summer in the city, and as with the warming trend reportedly increasing with every year, it's hard to ignore the unbearable heat of some of our hottest days. As Suffolk County Sheriff, I am charged with the safety and security of our population, and, by extension, the communities that we live in. While my work doesn't call for my direct involvement in environmental protection efforts, I am always working to improve the broader conditions that affect the wellbeing of people living, working and learning in Suffolk County and beyond.

Among the most urgent, but lesser-known issues affecting our communities is the urban heat island (UHI) effect, a phenomenon that exacerbates heat in densely built territories and poses severe threats to public health. Normal human activities – like transportation and industrial processes – coupled with city infrastructure that includes the urban canyons of tall buildings that offer poor street ventilation and darker, impermeable surfaces that absorb radiation and restrict water evaporation – generate hotter landscapes than surrounding rural locales.

Locally, reports show a steady uptick in extreme heat events in Boston, underscoring both the accelerating pace of climate change and its unequal toll. This trend is worsened by the UHI effect's global warming positive feedback loop: reliance on air conditioning increases energy consumption, algae blooms degrade water quality, and trapped heat intensifies air pollution. Mitigating climate impacts is a matter of justice, calling for urgent, community-driven, and equity-focused solutions.

According to a recent Boston Globe report, between 2020 and 2025, Boston's summers have grown longer, hotter, and more dangerous. The number of days exceeding 90 degrees Fahrenheit has increased, straining emergency services, elevating health risks, and worsening the UHI effect. It is most severe in areas with sparse tree cover and dark pavement, contributing to lower albedo: a surface's ability to reflect solar radiation. Surface temperatures in neighborhoods such as Roxbury, Chelsea, and Dorchester can soar up to 15 degrees higher than their wealthier counterparts. This disparity is not a coincidence. It is the product of decades of disinvestment, discriminatory housing policies, and environmental neglect that have left working-class neighborhoods vulnerable to climate stressors.

Heat-mapping studies by the Museum of Science, Northeastern University, and Boston's Environment Department made these inequities visible with stark clarity. In 2022, the "Wicked Hot Boston" project used mobile sensors to measure ambient air temperatures. Their findings confirmed what residents already knew anecdotally: the hottest parts of the city often coincide with neighborhoods that have the fewest resources to combat rising temperatures. These are communities where AC is not a given, vegetation is scarce, and people are more likely to suffer from pre-existing health conditions aggravated by extreme heat.



Peer-reviewed research affirms what these maps have shown. A 2021 study published in *Nature Communications* linked historical redlining to present-day disparities in urban heat exposure. In Boston, this legacy has resulted in tree canopy coverage of less than 10 percent in neighborhoods like East Boston and Mattapan, compared to 30 percent or more in wealthier districts. Green spaces are not ornamental luxuries, but rather critical cooling infrastructure. Shade and evapotranspiration – the process where water moves from the Earth's surface to the atmosphere – can lower ambient temperatures by several degrees, significantly reducing heat-related illnesses. Yet access to these cooling benefits remains deeply unequal.

As Sheriff, I've seen how these climatic inequities are compounded for our most vulnerable populations—seniors, individuals experiencing homelessness, those with chronic illness, and incarcerated individuals. During heat waves, emergency calls rise and heat-related ailments surge. For those without access to cooling, whether at home, at work, or in community spaces, the risk escalates quickly. Therefore, it's crucial to integrate UHI effect prevention into our broader public safety strategy. It is a public health imperative as much as an environmental one.

Fortunately, Boston is not standing still.

Mayor Michelle Wu's 2022 Heat Resilience Plan offers a robust framework for action. It centers historically underserved neighborhoods and prioritizes community-led design, tree canopy expansion, and investments in cooling infrastructure. New food forests have been planted on formerly vacant lots, transforming underutilized spaces into hubs of shade and nourishment. Reflective roofing and cool pavement technologies are being tested in pilot zones to reduce surface heat absorption. Cooling centers are being updated and strategically located to reach underserved populations. Partnerships between city departments, nonprofits, and grassroots leaders are amplifying those most impacted, ensuring that resilience strategies are shaped by community needs rather than top-down mandates.

Still, we must remain vigilant against unintended consequences. In some cases, greening and climate upgrades have led to rising property values, driving long-time residents out of the neighborhoods that climate investments are meant to protect. Equitable climate resilience must include policies that protect tenants, support homeownership in vulnerable communities, and embed environmental justice into every zoning, development, and infrastructure decision.

As we prepare for an increasingly warmer climate, I remain committed to ensuring that Suffolk County leads with foresight. We must expand tree planting, build cooling spaces, retrofit housing, and invest in sustainable infrastructure under the assertion that the right to environmental justice is a matter of public safety.

On the individual level, I advise citizens to tap into local resources. Low-income tenants can receive assistance through programs like the city's Housing Stability Program and ABCD's Energy Services, which offer support like free AC for medically vulnerable residents, weatherization, and utility assistance. Partnerships with organizations like GreenRoots and Boston's Community Choice Electricity program help fund energy-efficient installations and advocate for cooling infrastructure in affordable housing. When we confront the UHI effect and ensure Greater Boston has the tools to stay cool, we are affirming that every life, in every neighborhood, is worth protecting—not just from crime, but from the silent, searing dangers of unchecked heat.



EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT: JULIE POMALES

When Julie Pomales first arrived at the Suffolk County House of Correction in 1991, she admits she wasn't entirely sure what she was walking into. After hearing about an open secretary position with Inmate Legal Services at the Deer Island House of Correction, she jumped at the opportunity. What started as a simple search for work quickly became a lifelong calling.

Transitioning out of Inmate Legal Services in 1995, Pomales managed departmental layoffs and transitions with resilience, working in Records and Classification before landing her current role as a caseworker in 2017 under Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins. "I wanted to challenge myself and work my mind," she explained.

Now working in the units, Pomales is a vital link between incarcerated individuals and the court system. Her days start early: gathering paperwork, reviewing inmate requests, and meeting with individuals during recreation hours.

Through it all, you can hear her classic radio from down the hall playing reggaeton and salsa's

greatest hits. Whether helping someone secure clothes, find a court date, or access housing or drug treatment programs like "Opioid and Addiction Services Inside South Bay" (OASIS) and Casa Esperanza, Pomales approaches every task with struc-

ture, empathy, and a sharp sense of intuition. Beloved throughout the Department, she's greeted with a warm "Hey, Julie!" from nearly everyone who passes by—a testament to the camaraderie she's cultivated between staff and sentenced individuals alike.

As a caseworker, Pomales navigates the complexities of her career through boundaries and mutual respect. "They need to know I'm here to help them," she explains, "but I can't just grab their hand. You've got to help without overstepping." It's a delicate balance she's mastered over decades, often catching details others might miss, like a gut feeling that someone needs mental health support or recognizing when a family reunification is on the line.

Pomales' career is marked not only by longevity but by a quiet, steadfast impact. She remembers an inmate who thought he was still in the army, saluting other men in the unit. Pomales stepped in, ensured he received mental health attention, and helped prevent a

potentially dangerous misunderstanding. In another instance, she verified that an inmate who had made bail was still being held due to an administrative oversight. "He called and said, 'Julie, thank you.' His mom got to bring his child home that night."

While she's seen the population and dynamics shift over the years, Pomales' approach hasn't changed. "You've got to go with the flow. The people may be younger, but the goal is still the same: help them meet their needs." Whether it's connecting someone to Drug Court, arranging a bed at a reentry program, or simply translating Spanish for a nurse, Pomales sees herself as a bridge between systems and people.

When asked what she's proudest of, Pomales smiles. "What I'm proud of is where I'm at. I've accomplished who I am. I love my coworkers and supervisors, and I've overcome every challenge." To new caseworkers, she offers this advice: "Ask questions. Take notes. Don't be afraid to come to your supervisor. You've got to enjoy what you do—but know your limits, and know how to manage people's energy."

After 34 years of service, Pomales hopes to be remembered not just for her work but for her character: someone who helped when it mattered, who knew how to lead a team, and who brought strength, respect, and heart to every corner of the House of Correction.

SCSD CELEBRATES OFFICERS OF THE MONTH



JAIL SERGEANT
JOSEPH ZOCCOLA



HOC CORPORAL
PAULA SULLIVAN



JULY 2025

As we continue to honor the dedication and professionalism of our staff, we are pleased to recognize our July Officers of the Month Sergeant Joseph Zoccola of the Suffolk County Jail and Officer Paula Sullivan of the House of Correction. Both individuals exemplify the commitment and integrity that define our Department, and we are especially proud to celebrate them as they mark the conclusion of their distinguished careers.

Sergeant Joseph Zoccola, who officially retired on July 18th, 2025, has been selected as the Suffolk County Jail's Officer of the Month in recognition of his exceptional operational knowledge, reliability in critical administrative processes, and consistent professionalism throughout his twenty-year career.

Jail Superintendent Jose Mojica noted that "Zoccola's vast operational knowledge allows him to seamlessly integrate into various roles and contribute effectively across multiple functions, making him an integral part of the overall operations plan." He continued, "Sergeant Zoccola's expertise truly shines in his critical role as a Records Supervisor. In this capacity, he is directly responsible for ensuring the meticulous and consistent processing of all necessary documentation. This crucial responsibility includes everything from vital intake paperwork for new arrivals to the complex documentation required to facilitate court transportation for individuals within the facility.

His unwavering professional approach to every task he is assigned, regardless of its complexity or scope, serves as a commendable model for others within the Department."

Zoccola's time with the Department has been marked by consistency, dedication, and a genuine drive to support both his colleagues and the

people we serve. Reflecting on his career, he shared, "I have been fortunate over my career with the Department. I had great supervisors who trained me effectively and placed me in positions to succeed."

Throughout his service, Sergeant Zoccola worked in nearly every area of the Jail, approaching each assignment with professionalism and purpose. Beyond his regular duties, he continually sought opportunities to contribute more broadly to the Department. He served on the Honor Guard for five years, participated in the Choice Program, and was part of the Tactical Response Team (TRT) since its formation in 2011. For the past three years, he has also served as a dedicated member of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

"Everyone wants to be recognized for their work, especially if you're a hard worker," he said. "I believe this award is a fitting way to conclude my career with the Department. It's a great way to end on a high note." We thank Sergeant Zoccola for his decades of outstanding service and wish him the very best in retirement.

Corporal Paula Sullivan has also been recognized as Officer of the Month for her vigilance, professionalism and dedication to public safety within the House of Correction. In her role, she has discovered contraband multiple times, including identifying the source of a homemade weapon

and preventing its reentry into the facility. HOC Superintendent Michael Lally remarked, "She goes above and beyond consistently."

Sullivan has been with the Department for more than a decade. She currently works in booking and female property, but her professional path before joining the Department was quite different—first working in graphic design and later as a massage therapist. After being introduced to law enforcement, she applied to the Academy and, although initially rejected, remained determined and eventually graduated with outstanding leadership skills in mentoring, earning recognition for her abilities.

She was promoted to sergeant in her fifth year, but stepped down to return to her role as an Corporal, finding more fulfillment. Nine months away from her official retirement from our Department, she looks back at her prosperous career, saying, "It's nice to see that I'll be retiring and leaving here feeling like I've made a difference."

Congratulations to Sergeant Joseph Zoccola and Corporal Paula Sullivan for their well-deserved recognition. Their careers exemplify service, commitment, and integrity.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department appreciates the impact they've had on our population, among colleagues and throughout Suffolk County.

LOCKED IN, TUNED IN: HOW THE DEPARTMENT'S NEW PODCAST PROGRAM EMPOWERS INCARCERATED VOICES



At the Suffolk County House of Correction, a six-week podcast program is doing more than teaching camera angles and audio editing—it's creating space for reflection and transformation. Now wrapping its second cohort, SCSD's new Podcast Program offers incarcerated individuals the tools to tell their own stories and the confidence to shape their futures through twelve structured lesson plans.

Led by Program Director and digital media expert Clifford Bonnet, the course introduces participants to the art of podcasting, from technical setup to interview prep and production. But, as Bonnet explains, the deeper value lies in what happens behind the microphone. "The technical piece you can teach in two weeks," he says. "But, helping someone build confidence and practice patience...that's where the real growth happens."

For many participants, the experience has proven empowering. One student, currently housed in the "Positive Energy Always Creates Elevation" (PEACE) Unit, shared, "Podcasting helps me tap into my creative self. The storytelling helps me unpack my thoughts, almost like therapy." With a background in music and entertainment, he saw the podcast as a natural extension of his passions. "I've never been big on the spotlight, but being on camera helped me push past that."

Each week, students work collaboratively to plan and produce episodes. Together, they interview guests, share personal insights, and learn the language of video and audio. For one returning student, the class helped him "get to the deeper meaning" in conversations. Others shared how interviewing fellow participants fostered friendships and revealed unexpected connections, like bonding over childhood experiences or family dynamics.

Students also gain hard skills vital for professional growth upon release: setting up cameras, switching angles, learning to edit, and preparing professional interviews. "You can start creating with just a phone and \$50," Bonnet reminded students. "The important thing is having something to say and the discipline to say it well." The class, kept intentionally small, emphasizes quality over quantity, ensuring each student has hands-on time with the equipment and meaningful time in discussion. The motto? "Check your ego at the door."

As a key aspect of the course, Bonnet ensures his students are equipped with the knowledge of how to translate newfound digital media skills into a potentially lucrative career, despite upfront cost and employment obstacles. One student plans to launch a rug-tufting business and a social media channel. An-

other aims to use his Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 30 certification to work in construction, using the podcasting skills as a way to promote future endeavors. "There's no reason we shouldn't have a piece of that social media pie," he said.

For returning citizens looking to



break into the media industry, success after incarceration depends on more than just personal growth. It requires community action. As Bonnet emphasizes, "a served sentence should be seen as a punishment paid." Legal, sustainable employment is a cornerstone of rehabilitation, and employers must be willing to see potential beyond a record. Many of the men in this program are not only building technical skills but demonstrating initiative, professionalism, and a deep desire to learn. Whether it's apprenticeships or mentorship, Bonnet urges the public: "If someone is earnestly and responsibly looking for an opportunity, take the chance and give them one."

In a place where stories are often silenced, podcasting has become a powerful platform for healing, proving that voices on the inside still carry far. Looking ahead, the Suffolk County House of Correction plans to expand the program into editing and advanced media studies, offering competitive, real-world training in step with the digital age.

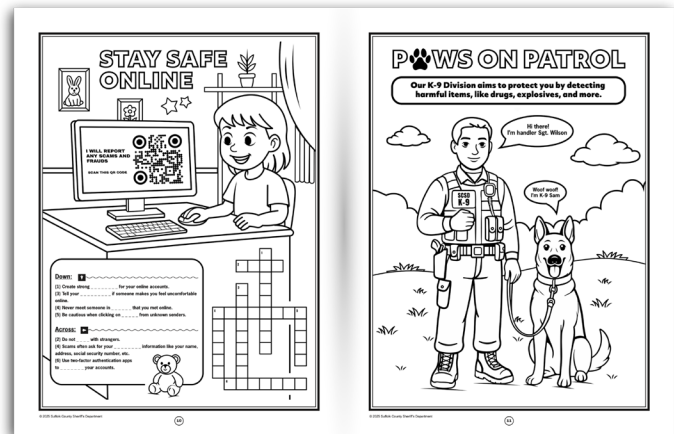


PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY THROUGH CREATIVITY

SCSD Offers Redesigned Safety Tips For Kids Coloring Book

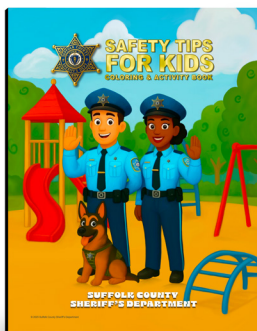
In our continued mission to promote public safety and support positive childhood development, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department has redesigned its Safety Tips for Kids Coloring and Activity Book.

Designed to be both educational and fun, the book includes a variety of activities and puzzles that help children learn how to protect themselves and others in potentially dangerous situations. And, of course, it also features engaging coloring pages that encourage creative expression while reinforcing safety awareness.



This month, we were especially excited to celebrate National Coloring Book Day on August 2nd and to continue using art and creativity to promote safety and awareness among our youngest community members. As we expand the distribution of copies throughout Suffolk County neighborhoods, we encourage children to stay safe, be aware, and take part in building a better place for everyone through wise and responsible actions.

This coloring book was handed out to children during National Night Out (NNO) events on August 4th and 5th, and will be distributed at community events throughout the year.

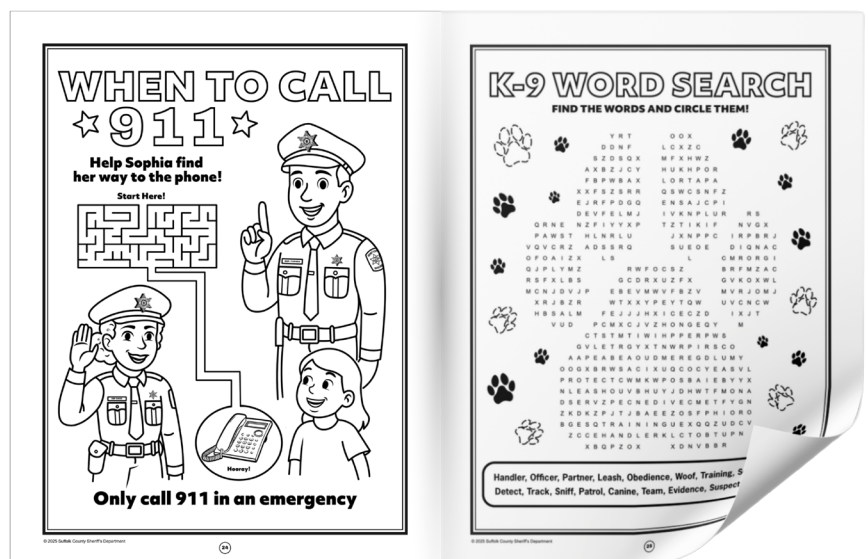


To learn where you can pick up a free copy of the book, please contact our Office of Communications and External Affairs at:

(617) 704-6655.

You can also access a PDF version of the book and view the answer key online at:

scsdma.org/safety-tips-for-kids





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

Celebrate
**Women's
Equality Day**

AUGUST 26, 2025

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AROUND SUFFOLK COUNTY



BOSTON AREA CHURCH LEAGUE BACK AT IT FOR THE SUMMER!

On July 12th, the Boston Area Church League hosted its opening day of training for the Free Summer Baseball Program and Community Picnic at Hunt Almont Playground in Mattapan. In association with the Red Sox Foundation, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, the Boston Police Department, and numerous community partner organizations, the Boston Area Church League aims to build trust between families and local law enforcement by offering children an equal-opportunity initiative to learn a classic Boston pastime: the

sport of baseball. Hosted every Saturday through August 23rd, our SCSD team has proudly committed their weekends to engaging with the youth of Suffolk County.

SCOOPS & HOOPS: REACHING YOUTH IN CRISIS

On July 19th, more than 2,000 people gathered at Francias A. Ryan Memorial Playground in Mattapan for the 24th annual Scoops & Hoops event, combining basketball, music, and family fun in support of Youth in Crisis, a local non-profit dedicated to protecting Boston's youth from violence. The day featured appearances from Celtics legend Dana Barros and Ron DeVoe of New Edition, alongside a high-energy basketball tournament for players ages 15 to 45. Families enjoyed a range of activities, including a children's train ride, horse and pony rides, face painting, a photo booth, an ice cream truck, and interactive tables from local organizations. Special thanks to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department team—ADS Christina Chaney, Captain Deniqua Lopes, Sergeant Tom Maguire, Deputy Deja Singletary, Deputy Kim Hoy, Officer Anissa Carter, and caseworkers Nadia Lovinsky and Antoinette Thomas—for showing up and showing out in support of our community's youth!



HOUSE OF FAITH. HEART OF SERVICE: A 10TH ANNUAL MEET AND GREET

On July 19th, the 10th Annual Meet and Greet at Christian Congregation: House of Faith brought the Dorchester community together for a joyful day of faith, fellowship, and back-to-school support. Led by Senior Pastor Betsabe Ayuso, the event featured the giveaway of 200 backpacks filled with school supplies, raffle prizes including personal training sessions, and performances from local church choirs. Families enjoyed free food and drinks, a bounce house for the kids, and the chance to explore offerings from local vendors. We're grateful to our SCSD team for tabling the event and engaging with the community throughout the day.

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