

SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT



COMMON GROUND

JULY 2026

MEET THE SCSD

CHEFS





SCSD'S MESSAGE

JULY 2026

Greetings...

...and welcome to the July edition of the Common Ground Newsletter.

In this issue, we take you behind the scenes of our kitchen operations at the Suffolk County Jail and House of Correction. Here, you will meet the dedicated culinary team that serves thousands of meals each day to our residents and staff. From planning nutritious menus and

coordinating with food vendors to overseeing daily kitchen operations and creating the meals enjoyed by staff, discover the commitment and teamwork that keep one of the Department's largest operations running smoothly.

We also highlight a groundbreaking partnership between Roca, Inc., the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, and Boston Medical Center's Project EVOLVE, which brought restorative justice into the Suffolk County Jail. Through a two-day healing circle, incarcerated young men engaged in meaningful conversations about trauma, forgiveness, and personal growth, demonstrating how restorative practices can foster accountability, self-reflection, and hope for the future.

Finally, we take a look at the Department's participation in Flag Sojourn 250, a nationwide tribute commemorating the United States' upcoming Semiquincentennial. Follow the symbolic journey of a single American flag as it traveled across Massachusetts, stopping at historic landmarks, military memorials, and commemorative ceremonies that honored the nation's founding, celebrated its enduring ideals, and paid tribute to the service and sacrifice of those who have defended them.

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

~The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department

COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

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SCSD'S CULINARY TEAM & KITCHEN OPERATIONS

Behind every meal served at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department is a coordinated culinary operation that begins hours before breakfast and continues through dinner service. Across both the Suffolk County Jail and the House of Correction, a team of civilian chefs and residents assigned to the kitchen work together to operate staff kitchens and prepare hundreds of meals a day, meeting the dietary demands of religious, allergy, and health considerations.



While resident meals are carefully prepared, the detainee and inmate menus themselves are developed by Trinity Food Services and approved by the Department. They supply the food and pantry items needed to support daily meals, while our chefs coordinate closely with the vendor to ensure kitchens remain fully stocked. During the spring and summer months, fresh produce from our CGI (Common Ground Institute) Urban Farm—grown and maintained by officers and residents—is incorporated into meals when possible.

Our chefs adhere to a five-week rotating menu for resident meal schedules and standardized recipes while adapting to changing inventory, equipment availability, and daily population counts. Staff meals are where chefs are encouraged to exercise their culinary craft. With their input, the executive chefs develop seasonal menus with flavorful finesse. Residents assigned to the kitchens also play an essential role in daily kitchen operations, assisting with food preparation, tray assembly, sanitation, and cleaning under the supervision of Departmental staff. They receive hands-on training from chefs and officers in kitchen responsibilities, including food safety, equipment operation, and meal preparation using commercial kitchen equipment.



Although the facilities share the same overall mission and are staffed by executive chefs, chefs, residents, and security staff, the kitchens differ significantly in scale and workflow contingent on the needs of the Jail and HOC.

At HOC, approximately thirty-five people help operate the kitchen each day, including the executive chef, the chefs, twenty to twenty-five resident workers, a lieutenant, a sergeant, and three officers. Chefs and residents



prepare and serve more than 1,100 meal trays at each meal while ensuring the kitchen remains clean, organized, and operating efficiently.

A typical day for a chef begins long before sunrise. The first shift chef arrives at 3:30am to begin breakfast preparation with the assistance of resident workers. Tray assembly starts at 5:30am, followed shortly by meal delivery to the housing units at 6:30am by officers. Consequently, the executive chef, lunch and dinner chefs arrive throughout the morning and afternoon to oversee resident meals, staff meals preparation, and daily kitchen operations, ensuring meal services remain on schedule.



Still, when equipment fails, staffing changes, or Boston's blizzards rip through the roads, the work continues.

Meet the chefs who make serving food for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's facilities possible. At the Jail, the culinary team includes Executive Chef John Wong and Chefs Sean Guerin, Mackenzie Abney, and John Rizzo. At the HOC, the team includes Chefs Joseph Kilcommons, James Bailey, Kenneth Johnson, Thomas Piotrowski, and recently retired Executive Chef Michael Hussey, who served the institution for over thirty years and whose leadership and dedication helped shape the kitchen's operations at the HOC.

Additionally, retiring this past April was Chef Patricia Suazo, who served for more than a decade. Known for her warm personality and exceptional desserts, Suazo left a lasting impression on colleagues throughout the Department. "If you ask any of the officers or the administrators who work here what they think of Patricia, they all loved her and all miss her already. She made great soups every day, her desserts were just fantastic. She was very hard working and always gave 150% every day and was excellent at what she did," commented retired Executive Chef Hussey.

MEET OUR CHEFS: SUFFOLK COUNTY JAIL & HOC



Jail Executive Chef John Wong: For more than twenty-five years, Executive Chef John has been a steady presence in the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department kitchens, where consistency, teamwork, and reliability have defined his career. Having started in 2001, Wong has spent decades helping prepare meals for both staff and incarcerated individuals, adapting to changing operations while remaining committed to getting the job done. Twenty-one years spent learning the trade in his brother-in-law's Chinese restaurant laid the foundation for a career built on practical experience. The best days for Wong are those when every meal is served without complaint after giving his best. Outside the kitchen, Wong enjoys spending time on the Franklin Park golf course, where he has been an avid golfer for more than four decades. Back at home, his wife is the head chef, but don't let that fool you; at the Jail, Chef Wong is a tried-and-true culinary boss.



Jail Chef Sean Guerin: Chef Sean Guerin has spent nearly thirty years in professional kitchens, but his passion for cooking began long before that. At just twelve years old, he was already sketching plans for the restaurant he hoped to own someday. Growing up in a family of nine, Guerin joined the U.S. Army to help pay for college before beginning a career that took him from Howard Johnson's to managing restaurants in Boston's South End and Quincy. Referred to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department by a friend, he now says he "kicks himself" for not making the move sooner. Five years into his role at the Suffolk County Jail, Guerin has embraced the cooking camaraderie and has become a cornerstone of the kitchen operation, known for his award-winning chili, collaborative approach, and willingness to support both his fellow chefs and correctional staff. Looking ahead, he hopes to continue growing with the Department, eventually stepping into a leadership role, but emphatically says one thing is certain: "This is my retirement job."



Jail Chef John Rizzo: Chef John Rizzo brings more than a decade of professional culinary experience to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, where he combines a background in restaurant kitchens, institutional food service, and security to help keep one of SCSD's busiest divisions running smoothly. After spending three years with Trinity Food Services overseeing shipping, receiving, and food inventory at the Suffolk County House of Correction, Rizzo joined the Suffolk County Jail as a chef, marking a year and a half since his transition from stocking to stovetop. Growing up with a passion for cooking that began at just eight years old, Rizzo enjoys the creative freedom to put his own spin on familiar menu items and measures personal success by the people who leave the table satisfied. Outside the kitchen, he enjoys spending time hiking, visiting the beach, and spending time with his family.



Jail Chef Mackenzie Abney: Chef Mackenzie Abney brings an uncommon path to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, trading years spent as an oyster farmer on Cape Cod for a career in the culinary arts after graduating from cooking school. For more than two years, she has helped oversee one of the Jail's most demanding operations, preparing hundreds of meals each day for incarcerated individuals and correctional staff while managing specialized medical, religious, and vegetarian diets. She takes particular pride in challenging misconceptions about correctional food service and bringing a bit of happiness through her cooking, recalling the time when she wrapped up extra bread pudding for an appreciative CO who eagerly looks forward to the dessert. "That felt really special; to hear that they had liked my food." From her chicken teriyaki with pineapple to her pizza stroganoff, for Abney, every meal is an opportunity to provide a sense of care and normalcy to people who spend their days inside the facility, residents and officers alike.



Executive Chef Michael Hussey: When Michael Hussey was a young man, his father offered him a simple piece of advice that would shape the rest of his life: learn a trade. With college out of reach at the time, Hussey chose culinary arts, building a career that eventually led him to join the Department in 1996. After years of experience in the culinary arts, Hussey initially never imagined himself working inside a correctional facility. Encouraged to apply by a family member who worked at the HOC, he accepted what he thought would be a stable job during a difficult period in his life. Three decades later and a career built on dedication, he retired from the institution leaving a legacy behind in the kitchen for future chefs.

Hussey's journey in the Department began as the morning chef preparing breakfast before dawn, he advanced through the ranks before becoming Executive Chef in 2007. Throughout his tenure, he oversaw every aspect of the kitchen's daily operation, from coordinating meal production and managing staff schedules to ensuring specialized medical, religious, and vegetarian diets were prepared accurately for the facility's population. He also works closely with correctional officers and the Department's food service vendor to keep meal preparation in order, despite changing demands and supply challenges. Known for volunteering to work holidays so members of his team could spend time with their families, Hussey credited the camaraderie among the kitchen staff as one of the reasons the operation remained successful.

Over the course of his career, Hussey took great pride in mentoring both his fellow chefs and residents. During his first decade with the Department, he taught culinary arts classes to our population, finding fulfillment in sharing the skills he had honed over a lifetime. As Hussey begins this new chapter in his life, we wish him a well-deserved retirement, and we thank him for his service and dedication to the institution.





Chef Joseph Kilcommons: Chef Joseph Kilcommons has been a member of the HOC's culinary team since 2001, bringing more than two decades of experience, consistency, and mentorship to the kitchen. Drawing on a culinary background that prepared him for institutional food service, Kilcommons has spent his career helping

oversee the preparation of meals for both our residents and staff members while adapting to the growing complexity of dietary restrictions and food allergies.

Each day, Kilcommons helps coordinate and prepare dinner service, oversees food preparation, monitors inventory and storage, and works to ensure every meal is prepared safely and efficiently. While the demands of correctional food service have remained steady throughout his career, the greatest challenges often come from supply shortages and the increasing need to accommodate specialized diets.

For Kilcommons, however, the most rewarding part of the job extends beyond preparing meals. He enjoys teaching culinary skills to resident kitchen workers, believing that sharing practical knowledge can have a lasting impact long after someone returns to their community. He also credits the strong camaraderie among the kitchen staff for helping the team navigate daily challenges, emphasizing that communication, collaboration, and a shared commitment to serving others remain essential ingredients in the kitchen's success.



Chef James Bailey: Having joined the Department in 2015 and served as the "floating chef" for two years, James Bailey's role allows him to step into any shift the operation requires. Since assuming this position, he has worked breakfast, lunch, and dinner service, adapting to the unique demands of each while overseeing the production for

the tray line, making nearly 1,200 meals per shift for the institution, including medical and religious diets. Whether starting the day before sunrise preparing breakfast or coordinating lunch and dinner production, Bailey oversees inmate work crews, helps with food orders, ensures that menus stay on schedule, and keeps meal service running efficiently. Additionally, he oversees the staff cafeteria three shifts a week. His ability to transition seamlessly between shifts has made him a reliable presence in one of the Department's busiest operations.

Bailey finds one of the most rewarding aspects of working in the kitchen to be the opportunity to learn from his fellow chefs. He enjoys exchanging recipes and techniques that continually improve the meals they serve. He also takes pride in the teamwork required to keep the kitchen operating smoothly, understanding that consistent communication and preparation are essential when unexpected staffing or menu changes arise. For Bailey, delivering meals on time each day reflects the dedication shared by the entire culinary team.



Chef Kenneth Johnson: Chef Kenneth Johnson joined the HOC in 2021 after previously serving as General Manager for Trinity Services Group, the Department's food service vendor. With a professional background rooted in assisted living and hands-on kitchen operations, Johnson welcomed the opportunity to return to the day-

-to-day culinary work he enjoys most while continuing to serve others through food. Today, Johnson works alongside our population preparing lunch and dinner for the facility, overseeing the preparation of entrees, side dishes, and desserts while emphasizing food safety and proper kitchen techniques. As dietary needs and food allergies have become increasingly complex, he has embraced the responsibility of ensuring meals are prepared accurately while helping train new kitchen workers to safely perform their roles.

Johnson says his favorite part of the job is watching our residents develop confidence and new skills in the kitchen. While training workers with little or no previous culinary experience can be challenging, he believes patience, consistency, and teamwork create an environment where everyone contributes to the operation's success. For Johnson, a well-run kitchen depends on every member of the team understanding their role and working together toward the same goal.



Chef Thomas Piotrowski: Chef Thomas Piotrowski may be one of the newest members of the HOC's culinary team, but in a short time he has become an integral part of the kitchen's daily operation. Joining the Department in February 2025, Piotrowski quickly expanded his responsibilities from preparing inmate lunches to overseeing

breakfast service and, following Chef Patricia Suazo's retirement, taking over the preparation of meals for the staff cafeteria.

Each day begins with coordinating inmate breakfast before shifting his attention to preparing lunch for staff, supervising our population that works in the kitchen, and ensuring food safety standards are met throughout the operation. His experience in a variety of professional kitchens has given him an appreciation for the collaborative environment at the HOC, where he says chefs regularly communicate, share ideas, and work together to solve problems.

Piotrowski credits teamwork as one of the biggest differences from kitchens he has worked in previously. Rather than the high-pressure atmosphere often found in the restaurant industry, he says the Department's kitchen encourages cooperation, creativity, and mutual support. Although recent retirements have brought significant changes to the culinary team, Piotrowski looks forward to helping carry that tradition forward while continuing to build on the strong foundation established by those before him.



ROCA INC. BRINGS RESTORATIVE HEALING CIRCLE TO THE SUFFOLK COUNTY JAIL

For two days, the familiar rhythms of incarceration gave way to a practicum in introspection and community healing inside the Suffolk County Jail. As part of a partnership between Roca, Inc., the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, and members of Boston Medical Center's Project EVOLVE team, incarcerated young men, behavioral health clinicians, and formerly incarcerated mentors gathered in a restorative justice circle designed to foster personal reflection and self-forgiveness.

"What I like most about circle work is it sort of puts everyone on an equal playing field," said Deb Goldfarb, Director of Population Behavioral Health at Boston Medical Center and Project EVOLVE Associate. "You sort of get away from the power structures that exist here in jail."

Throughout the workshop, participants discussed grief, trauma, healing, and the experiences that shaped their lives, bringing tangible items and images into the center to inspire conversation. When asked what she hoped participants took away from the sessions, Deb explained that "Maybe this isn't the primary function of the circle... You know, to eat takeout and Chinese food and sit at a table and break bread with staff," but with the normalcy of separation in carceral settings, perhaps participants felt "just some reprieve or respite from the day-to-day."

For David Baxter, Roca Boston's Reentry Coordinator, the significance of the moment extended far beyond the workshop. "Watching these young men go through the process [of forgiveness] for the first time and hearing them be vulnerable in a place that often critiques vulnerability," Baxter emphasized, "I believe this is a monumental moment." Baxter, whose own



life is a testament to restorative justice, reinforced what he has witnessed throughout his career: "There comes a time when you have to stop asking 'What did you do?' and start asking the question, 'What happened to you?'" He continued, "Behind every act that we have criminalized, there is a story, and behind that story is a lot of trauma."

"My eyes tear up a little bit thinking about it," said 23-year-old participant DeShawn. "Everybody in the circle was from different backgrounds, but we all basically had the same story, just different routes in life." For DeShawn, the experience challenged long-held expectations about masculinity, offering a rare opportunity to speak openly without judgment. "Where we come from, we were told very young that men aren't supposed to cry or express themselves," he described. "Being able to be around a circle full of men... where we could express ourselves in a judge-free zone was amazing."

One question posed by Baxter in particular left a lasting impression: What does it mean to forgive yourself? "If you wanted somebody to forgive you, you'd buy them flowers and cater to them," Deshawn reflected. "When you forgive yourself, it means to learn how to love yourself."

Another participant, Nas, revealed how the workshop helped him con-

front more painful experiences. "The circle itself allowed me to dig into some of the stuff I'd buried that fueled the negative lifestyle I had been living," he explained. "It gave me insight to work toward being a better person."

Saquan echoed those sentiments, emphasizing that restorative justice creates space for growth while challenging common misconceptions about incarceration. "The people who are incarcerated do want to change," Saquan asserted. "When you've got more of a positive community, that helps the most with anything."

As the workshop concluded, Baxter expressed hope that the event represents the beginning of an ongoing commitment to restorative practices within the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. "I want to thank BMC as well as the Suffolk County Jail for coming together to make this a joyous moment... And I want to thank the young incarcerated men for being brave enough to participate in this program. They are the real stars of this circle."

Whether the circle becomes a lasting tradition remains to be seen, but what is certain is that the first gathering already planted a seed for growth in the young men to continue restorative justice healing. For that, we thank Roca in return for their continued partnership.

FLAG SOJOURN 250: HONORING THE UNITED STATES' SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL



As part of the nationwide commemoration leading up to the United States' 250th anniversary in 2026, members of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department staff and Honor Guard proudly participated in Flag Sojourn 250, a national tribute carrying a single American flag on a year-long journey. This symbolic pilgrimage honors the nation's founding ideals, remembers those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the country, and celebrates the enduring spirit of unity represented by the American flag.

Organized by the National Flag Foundation in partnership with America250's America Waves program, the flag traveled to every U.S. State, territory, and overseas military cemetery, covering roughly 40,000 miles in 10 countries, before concluding its journey in Washington, D.C. on July 4th for the Semiquincentennial. Along its route, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department played a pivotal role in escorting the flag across the Commonwealth.

The Massachusetts leg of the journey began on June 11, when Suffolk County Special Sheriff Mark Lawhorne and members of the Department's Honor Guard welcomed the

flag to the Commonwealth at the Suffolk County Jail during a ceremonial transfer from New Hampshire Sheriff William Wright. From there, members of the Department's Honor Guard helped escort the flag to a series of historic sites and commemorative events across the Commonwealth.

On June 12, the Honor Guard participated in the 2026 Deborah Sampson Award Ceremony at the Hall of Flags in the Massachusetts State House. The following day, June 13, the flag traveled aboard a Historic Boston Harbor Tour, passing iconic landmarks including Fort Independence, Old North Church, and the USS Constitution, recognizing Boston's central role in the nation's founding. The journey continued on June 14 with two Flag Day ceremonies: first at the Massachusetts National Cemetery in Bourne, honoring the generations of American service members laid to rest there, and later aboard the Mayflower II in Plymouth, where the flag was recognized at one of New England's most significant historic landmarks. On June 15, members of the Honor Guard escorted the flag to the USS Massachusetts at Battleship Cove in Fall River before continuing to Springfield on June 16 for a cere-



Massachusetts National Cemetery and Mayflower II, June 14th

mony at the 9/11 Memorial Riverfront Park, paying tribute to the sacrifices of military members, first responders, and all who have served the nation. The Commonwealth's portion of the Flag Sojourn concluded on June 17, when the flag arrived for the 251st Anniversary of the Battle of Bunker Hill, connecting one of the nation's defining Revolutionary War battles with the upcoming celebration of America's founding.

Throughout each stop, members of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Honor Guard proudly represented the Department alongside the Massachusetts Sheriff's Association and fellow Sheriff's Offices, including Barnstable, Plymouth, Bristol, and Hampden County.

Thank you to our staff and Honor Guard, whose participation reflected the Department's continued commitment to honoring our nation and preserving the traditions that unite the Commonwealth.

Special thanks to our fellow Sheriffs, national and local partners, including the National Flag Foundation, America250, MA 250, the National Sheriffs' Association, the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association, the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security, the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, UPS, the American Battle Monuments Commission, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Veterans Services.

To learn more about Flag Sojourn 250, visit: www.nationalflagfoundation.org/sojourn250/



Fall River, June 15th

FLAG SOJOURN 250

HONORING OUR NATION. REMEMBERING OUR HEROES

