



Common Ground



The Newsletter of the Suffolk County
Sheriff's Department
Steven W. Tompkins, Sheriff

Sheriff Tompkins of Suffolk County Named President of Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association

Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins has been elected to serve as President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association (MSA).

Following what was a unanimous vote by the other 13 sitting sheriffs, Sheriff Tompkins was equal parts grateful and energized by his selection to the presidency, a position that carries with it a two-year term of service.

"I am both elated and honored to be chosen as MSA President," said Sheriff Tompkins. "It's always humbling to be recognized by one's peers and I take this mantle very seriously. I look forward to fulfilling the mission of the organization."

Established 30 years ago, the MSA is made up of the 14 county sheriffs in Massachusetts, and according to its mission statement, works "to secure a unity of action by the sheriffs of the Commonwealth in order to address the numerous issues that have a direct relationship and impact on the entire criminal justice system, and which may affect the operation of the various sheriffs' offices." These issues include, but are not limited to: "those related to law enforcement, the care and custody of inmates and detainees, judicial services, transportation of prisoners, recidivism, officer training, re-entry programming, and legislative advocacy." In his role as the MSA President, Sheriff Tompkins will preside over a leadership team that includes vice presidents of Training and Leadership Development, Re-Entry and Aftercare, Information and Technology, and the State Director to the National Sheriffs' Association.



*Suffolk County Sheriff
Steven W. Tompkins*



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January 2016

Sheriff Tompkins, Department Hold Conversation About Substance Abuse & Mental Health Care

Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Department hosted “A Conversation About Substance Abuse & Mental Health Care In The Commonwealth,” as part of its Directions for Corrections forum series. Held at Roxbury Community College, the event drew 350-plus participants and featured a distinguished panel of experts that included: Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker; Secretary of the Executive Office of Health & Human Services Marylou Sudders; Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian; President and CEO of the Dimock Center Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan; Joseph Feaster, Jr., Esq.; and iRecover Founder Jack Kelly. RCC President Dr. Valerie Roberson introduced former drummer for The Del Fuegos and founder of Right Turn Woody Giessmann, who shared his personal story of addiction and recovery.

During the two-hour discussion, panelists touched upon many of the obstacles faced by people struggling with addiction and mental illness, and the concerns voiced by family members and friends attempting to help their loved ones.

“I wanted to convene this forum because I believe that we as a community really need to wrap our arms around those who are suffering with addiction and mental illness,” said Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins, kicking off the conversation.

“We’re talking about addiction and mental health in a way that we haven’t talked about them before,” said Governor Charlie Baker. “But, we need to do more and we are working to do more by opening more recovery beds and addressing the disparities in care for those with mental illness and addiction. Everyone deserves to have quality care regardless of zip code.”

Middlesex Sheriff Peter Koutoujian strongly agreed, stating that, “A person shouldn’t have to go to prison to get good substance abuse & mental health treatment.”

Addressing the issue of treatment, Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan spoke about the need to connect those in need with available resources in a more effective way.

“What we are often seeing at The Dimock Center are families that don’t know where to go for help,” said Dr. Minter-Jordan. “We need to have centralized resources that make it easier for those seeking services to get them.”

As one who has powerfully advocated for help for those with mental illness, Joseph Feaster, Jr., Esq. shared the deeply personal story about his family’s struggle to deal with his son’s mental illness, which would tragically culminate in his son’s suicide. Feaster then explained that true progress in treatment of mental illness would come when society finally accepts it for what it is: a disease, not a stigma.



Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins (3rd from right) hosted “A Conversation About Substance Abuse & Mental Health Care In The Commonwealth,” a panel discussion that included Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker (far right); Secretary of the Executive Office of Health & Human Services Marylou Sudders (seated at left); Middlesex Sheriff Peter Koutoujian (far left); President and CEO of the Dimock Center Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan; Joseph Feaster, Jr., Esq.; and iRecover Founder Jack Kelly. Former drummer for The Del Fuegos and founder of @Right Turn Woody Giessmann shared his story of addiction and recovery to open the program.

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Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Hosts Holiday Graduation Celebration



Chef Dominic Bartholomew Director of the Culinary Arts Program at the House of Correction, distributes certificates to graduates.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently held a graduation ceremony for participants of the Culinary Arts Program, Basic Auto 101 course, Common Ground Institute and Retail Training Program. Coordinated by staff of the Vocational Education Division, the event included holiday singing from the male and female choir, certificates of completion for each respective program, refreshments, and much more. The goal of the Holiday Graduation Celebration was to provide a fun experience for inmates, as well as celebrate the holiday season and rejoice in the inmates accomplishments. Staff throughout the Department attended, as did the incarcerated individuals family members and friends.

The programs in which the graduates participated at the House of Correction are but a few of several offered by the Department. The graduation ceremony as a whole demonstrated the Department's ultimate mission of rehabilitation, which is rooted in helping offenders to develop their job skills and abilities while incarcerated. Congratulations were extended to all of the male and female graduates, choir members and speakers. Below is an excerpt of a speech delivered by Tarneisha R. Reynolds, a graduate of the Culinary Arts Program.

"I would like to thank all of the families, friends and pillars of support for attending this event. Today is not just about a certificate of completion, but for many of us it's another step on our paths building a stronger foundation, which we can further elaborate upon our release from the Suffolk County House of Correction. Over the past eight weeks, we as a group have displayed our ability to work well with others, be innovative and creative, and among other things, work in an environment that has contrasting personalities, ideals and opinions. Throughout this span of time, we as a collective group have learned to foster each other's weaknesses, turning those weaknesses into strengths.

Yes, one might think it's just culinary, it's just cooking something so simplistic. But to us, it's a skill learned that can be applied, not just on the stovetop, but in the kitchen of life.

Some of us have never had jobs, never written a resume, so needless to say, our work history could look sketchy. Thanks to this culinary program, we can now say we've worked in a fast paced environment, we're good at multi-tasking, we work well under pressure, we work well independently and in a group setting. We also have the ability to take the lead when appropriate just to list a few of our new found talents.

So many times, we forget that the point of incarceration is not just merely punitive, but as well as for rehabilitation.

We as inmates are taken away from our families and loved ones. The simple things in life, we take for granted for instance, cooking for those loved ones over an open flame, and preparing a meal, is something we can't do in this moment and time."

Sheriff's Department Delivers Toys for Tots

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently participated in the annual U.S. Marine Corps Reserve "Toys for Tots" Program.

Delivering several bags full of toys and games to the organization's Boston branch, staff of the House of Correction, the Jail and the Correction Officer Training Academy helped to make the toy collection drive a success.

"I'm proud of all of our staff members who contributed to the cause this year," said Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins. "Toys for Tots is such a special program, and we're always happy to lend our support. Any time that we have opportunities to offer assistance to families in need and make a difference, particularly during the holidays, when difficulties can become magnified, we should take them. After all, if we have the means to make life even just a little bit better for families and lift the spirits of the children in our communities, why wouldn't we do it?"



Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Deputy Stephen Fiste delivers bags full of toys and games that were donated by Department staff at the House of Correction, the Nashua Street Jail, and the Correction Officer Training Academy.

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As one who has powerfully advocated for help for those with mental illness, Joseph Feaster, Jr., Esq. shared the deeply personal story about his family's struggle to deal with his son's mental illness, which would tragically culminate in his son's suicide. Feaster then explained that true progress in treatment of mental illness would come when society finally accepts it for what it is: a disease, not a stigma.

Throughout the conversation, a host of important issues were discussed including greater ease of navigation of the health care system, the expansion of mental health and substance abuse services across the Commonwealth, and the much-debated proposal for legislation around involuntary commitment for those suffering with severe addiction.

"If you don't have a bill that is tough and controversial and, in my opinion, impactful, then you're not going to change any of this," said Jack Kelley, a member of the recovery community and founder of the iRecover application.

Ultimately, said Sheriff Tompkins, it is everyone's responsibility – from legislators and health practitioners to family and friends – to fight for a system in which all citizens in need of addiction recovery, mental illness and wellness services receive the care they need.

"At the end of the day, those of us who can help, it's incumbent upon us to help," Sheriff Tompkins said. "The hallmark of any vibrant community is how we take care of our most compromised, no matter who they are."

Boston City Councillor Ayanna Pressley Joins Women’s “Season of Healing” Event

The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department welcomed Boston City Councillor-At-Large Ayanna Pressley to the Suffolk County House of Correction, to speak at the “Season of Healing” event.



Boston City Councillor Ayanna Pressley addresses the audience, “I want you to know that redemption is a powerful thing.”

Hosted by the Department’s Women’s Program Services, the event was held to uplift the spirits of the women behind bars during the holiday season, and to encourage them to continue to make better choices in the future.

Currently 70%, percent of women incarcerated at the House of Correction self-identify as having domestic violence as part of their life story.

With this in mind, it is of critical importance to the Department that the physical and emotional scars of trauma that many of the women have faced are addressed while they are incarcerated.

Taking this into consideration, staff of Women’s Program Services brought Councillor Pressley in to share her story, as a means of reflection and resolution as the New Year approaches.

Providing the introduction to the program, Superintendent of the House of Correction Yolanda Smith spoke about, both the purpose of the event and its special guest speaker, who then welcomed all of the women.

“Well hello sisters,” Councillor Pressley began.

“I, like many of you, was raised with challenging but not unique circumstances. I was invited here as a politician, but I am here today as your sister in solidarity,” said Councillor Pressley.

Talking about her personal struggles and the power of resilience and redemption, Pressley encouraged the women to believe that they too can change, and the past does not necessarily dictate their future.

“I want you to know that redemption is a powerful thing, and you just can’t stop trying.” Councillor Pressley continued, “If you don’t remember anything that I’ve said, just remember that I see you, you are good, and so worth this fight.”



From L to R: Director of Women’s Programming Christina Ruccio, Boston City Councillor Ayanna Pressley and House of Correction Superintendent Yolanda Smith.

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Sheriff Tompkins of Suffolk County Named President of Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association

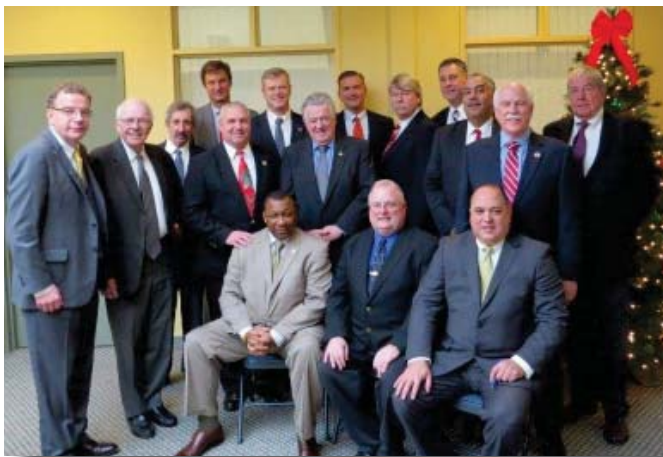
Sharing his experiences in working with Sheriff Tompkins, and applauding him for his most recent achievement, was another dedicated, well-known civic leader.

"I congratulate Sheriff Tompkins on being elected President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association," said Mayor Martin J. Walsh. "Sheriff Tompkins brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to his new role, and I look forward to working with him in this new capacity. He is a good friend and a great public servant who is committed to reducing violence, and he shares in my goal of making the City of Boston safe for everyone."

Speaking about his desire to bring the MSA further forward into the public discussion about the need for more addiction recovery and mental health services, anti-recidivism programming, greater focus on reducing domestic violence, and providing quality education and resources for crime prevention across the Commonwealth, Sheriff Tompkins acknowledged the challenges, even as he fully embraced them.

"I know that we, as the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association, haven't always been first in the minds or on the tongues of lawmakers, policy analysts, or even members of the local and national media, but I intend to fully utilize the resources of this office to its best capacity, to make sure that we are part of the conversation, particularly when it comes to public safety and the overall health of our communities."

"We, as county sheriffs, are the stewards of those in our care and custody, many of whom will be returning to the neighborhoods just outside of our facilities, and it is incumbent upon all of us to do our best, to see that they are returned to our society in better stead than when they left it. We have the ability to change lives and transform communities, and that's what I intend to continue doing, both as the Sheriff of Suffolk County, and now as the President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association."



Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins with Governor Charlie Baker, Massachusetts Sheriffs Association Executive Director James Walsh, and the 13 other sitting Massachusetts sheriffs : Michael Ashe, Hampden County (2nd from left); James Perelman, Nantucket County; (3rd from left); Thomas Bowler, Berkshire County (4th from left, 2nd row); Lewis Evangelidis, Worcester County (far left, back row); James... Cummings, Barnstable County (middle, 2nd row); Christopher Donelan, Franklin County (back row, 3rd from left); Michael McCormack, Dukes County (5th from right, 2nd row); Peter Koutoujian, Middlesex County (4th from right, back row); Frank Cousins, Essex County (3rd from right, 2nd row); Thomas Hodgson, Bristol County (2nd from right, middle row); Robert Garvey, Hampshire County (far right); Joseph McDonald, Jr., Plymouth County (front row, middle) and Michael Bellotti, Norfolk County (far right, front row).

Sheriff's Department Correction Officer Scores Big on the Basketball Court

Correction Officers (CO) at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department are equipped with many items that help them with their jobs, but officer Eddie Simpkins is throwing something else onto his list of equipment: basketballs.

Boston's Finest Basketball Club (BFBC) is an organization that CO Eddie Simpkins and his wife Latonia Pettie-Simpkins founded in February of last year. Although a basketball program on the surface, BFBC mentors at-risk youths and teaches them life skills, with an ultimate goal of students obtaining a higher education.

While it is the athletic component that initially attracts students, BFBC also hosts a speaker series on topics such as violence, substance abuse, and other pressures that young people experience. The program is committed to increasing accessibility to quality education to at-risk children within the community, and uses basketball the means to achieve that end.



Correction Officer Edward Simpkins.

"I use basketball as a component to keep them focused and bring them in, but we get their report cards, and stress being a student-athlete." CO Simpkins said, "To them, it's just basketball, but we also bring in facilitators to talk to our team members about different issues that they are facing in their lives, as well as bringing them to open houses for high schools, so that they can continue to excel academically." CO Simpkins said.

As an extensive athletic program, BFBC promotes the development of valuable qualities within each participating basketball player. Participants are challenged both on and off the basketball court to use their intelligence, endurance and spirit to champion winning in life and on the court.

A fairly new team, BFBC recently ventured to Hampton, VA to participate in a National Championship after the Division III East Coast Championship. With only seven players along for the trip three of whom had never played organized basketball, BFBC concluded its first season with an exciting victory, placing fourth in the entire tournament.



A photo of the trophy that Boston's Finest Basketball Club won.

"The basketball court is our dinner table, and everyone has to bring something to the table. Whether it's a steal, an assist or a blocked shot, everyone has to contribute in some way," Coach Simpkins said explaining his team's solid effort.

With the Department at the House of Correction since April of 1999, CO Eddie Simpkins worked with children both before and after he joined the Department. Starting out in the juvenile justice system in the early 1980s Simpkins stated, "I know that every kid has a gift out there, its just a matter of finding out what that gift is, and having them believe in themselves."



**Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins
& The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department**
cordially invite you to:



A Conversation with The Women of the Boston City Council

Tuesday, February 23, 2016
6:00 – 8:00 p.m. (*Doors open at 5:30 p.m.*)

Hibernian Hall

184 Dudley St.
Roxbury, MA 02119

Panelists include:

*Ayanna Pressley – City Councilor At-Large
Michelle Wu – City Councilor At-Large
Andrea Campbell – City Councilor for District 4
Annisa Essaibi-George – City Councilor At-Large*



This event is FREE and open to the general public.



To register online or receive more information about the forum:
call Colleen Fonseca at (617) 704-6688 or email cfonseca@scsdma.org



The Common Ground Newsletter is made available monthly for Department employees by the Office of Communications and External Affairs at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department. The newsletter is available to staff and external audiences and may be viewed at www.scsdma.org. It is printed as part of an inmate rehabilitation program at the South Bay House of Correction.

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department is committed to becoming the national model for providing effective offender supervision and re-entry services that ensure public safety. The Department serves the cities of Boston, Chelsea, and, Revere and the town of Winthrop. Employee suggestions are always welcome.

**Sheriff
Steven W. Tompkins**

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