

COMMON GROUND



Sheriff's Statement



In this issue of the Common Ground newsletter, we highlight some of the truly unsung heroes of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department – the Maintenance Division.

Made up of two teams of custody staff members – one for the Suffolk County

House of Correction and one for the Suffolk County Jail – the members of this division are tasked with the responsibility of keeping the structural and mechanical infrastructure of our facilities safe, sound and functional, often times employing creative and innovative solutions to complex problems while saving money for the Department and the taxpayers of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In addition, we provide readers with an inside look at the historic collaboration between the Department and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in which we welcomed to the House of Correction the six candidates vying to be the next Suffolk County District Attorney for a forum held before a group of incarcerated men and women.

Finally, we kick off the 5th Annual Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Summer Enrichment Program for teens entering Junior and Senior year in schools around the county.

I hope that you find this edition of our newsletter informative and insightful, and we wish you a safe and enjoyable summer.

-Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

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Sheriff's Department Summer Enrichment Program Returns

Read about the Department's summer employment program for Suffolk County teens.



Employee Profile: Lieutenant Peter Abban and Officer Mark Lowre

Meet the leaders of the Suffolk County House of Correction and Suffolk County Jail Maintenance Division.



Department Hosts Historic Forum For Inmates With DA Candidates

Learn about the Department's recent Candidate Forum through a feature published by The New York Times.





Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department are once again welcoming 20 high school students from Boston, Chelsea, Winthrop and Revere as participants in the Department's Fifth Annual Summer Enrichment Program.

The Summer Enrichment Program is one of several innovative programs that the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department provides for teens in Suffolk County. The program gives young individuals entering their junior and senior years of high school the opportunity to learn alongside law enforcement professionals while fostering positive relationships.

Participants join the Department three days a week for seven weeks during which time, they learn about the inner workings of law enforcement through job shadowing, weekly presentations by members of law enforcement, roundtable discussions, law enforcement-related field trips, and educational tours. During each week of the internship, members participate in a "meet and greet" with members of the law enforcement community on Wednesdays, and a tour or field trip on Friday's. The program also provides participants with uniform shirts and a plentiful amount of field trips to law enforcement facilities, state and city agencies, and more.

Launched in the summer of 2014, the Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) was created to provide summer employment for Suffolk County teens interested in pursuing future careers in law enforcement while creating the added benefit of bringing together uniformed officers and young people for positive interactions. These two critical elements provide participants the unique experience of understanding the career journeys of criminal justice professionals, as well as preparing them for the challenges and responsibilities of this sector. All participants have expressed interest in learning about the criminal justice system with a focus on law enforcement, the court system, social work and several other related fields of employment.

For more information on the program as it unfolds and to keep up with our Summer Enrichment Program, follow us on our social media sites.









As part of this month's Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Employee Profile, we spoke with members of the Maintenance Division from the Suffolk County House of Correction and Suffolk County Jail.

Lieutenant Peter Abban serves at the House of Correction and has been with the Department for 32 years. He leads a crew that consists of Deputies Edward Bannon, Joe Ristino and Thomas Westmoreland.

Officer Mark Lowre serves at the Suffolk County Jail and has been with the Department for 27 years. He leads a maintenance team that consists of Officers Eric Washington, George Allard, Jerry McCoy and Bob Jackson, who is on standby for electrical services.

What is the Maintenance Division?

Officer Mark Lowre - Maintenance is part of the Buildings and Support Services and we maintain the building. We are working on everything from painting, to electronics, and everything in between. Sometimes we fabricate items, which is to say that we sometimes have to make something, and I usually

design something and my guys or myself will weld it up.

Lieutenant Peter Abban - Maintenance is actually responsible for repairing ceilings, putting up walls, installing floor tiles, painting walls and ceilings, installing plumbing, fixing toilets, showers and sinks. As part of the Maintenance Division, we also have a locksmith here on hand. Ninety percent of the maintenance work inside the building is done by us. The majority of the work is done without outside contractors and this saves the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department and taxpayers of the Commonwealth a lot of money. If something in the institution breaks or malfunctions, we have very little down time to get it back up and running. We keep equipment and parts here at the Department, so even in the instances when we need an outside contractor, we can speed up the process since we wouldn't be waiting on parts to come in.

Tell us about your job.

Lieutenant Peter Abban - The first thing I do in the morning is check the emails from the day before and once that's completed, I look at the service request list. From there, I go over to our maintenance shop and fill out the key log book and radio log book, as well as pass out the service work for the day. I'm a licensed electrician and I'm also certified to work on the sally port doors. The only thing I don't do that pertains to the maintenance of the building is plumbing.

Officer Mark Lowre – Here in Maintenance, we repair anything from plumbing and electrical to sally port doors and lighting. As the Maintenance Supervisor I am in charge of ordering supplies and running the expense requests for contractors, vendors and supplies. First thing in the morning, I check my emails and I answer them. I'll see projects that need to get done and I'll tell the team what needs to get done. If there are any issues or they have any questions, I'll be there to supervise and help out with whatever I can.

How has your position and jobs changed over the years?

Lieutenant Peter Abban - I've been with the Maintenance Division since the



Suffolk County House of Correction building opened some 27 years ago. The first five years I was with the Department, I was serving at the Deer Island facility. When I first came in, I was learning how to work on the doors and sally port doors, and then I got into the electronics part of it and over time, I just ended up going to electrical school and got my license to do more skilled work.

Officer Mark Lowre - Before coming in to work for the Department I was working in construction and I had seen this position in the paper during a rough time in the industry. I went for it and worked inside the units for the first ten or so years up until 2000 when I was moved into the Maintenance Division. Looking back on my time here, some of my best memories are a lot of the guys that I used to work with. When I came to maintenance I had Captain Jerry Sheehan and Lt. Edwardo Quiles. They were both Mentors who taught me a lot, working together and sharing a lot together. At the time things seemed like they were a disaster, but when you look back on it you get a good laugh.

What's the most challenging thing about working with maintenance?

Lieutenant Peter Abban - Most of the jobs here don't last a day or two. With a different day comes a different problem, so we constantly have to find the time to complete long term projects while taking on the day-to-day issues as well. Working in a facility that is open seven days a week and twenty four hours also means we have to work around people and their workspaces, as well as people's living spaces. For example, there might be a maintenance request for inside of a classroom and we have to be very specific about when we are starting and completing a project so that the teachers can plan accordingly. We have to be creative and find the time to complete a job. We have a job to do, but we also can't shut down the entire system either.



Officer Mark Lowre – The most challenging part is when something goes down and you are having a really hard time trying to repair it. Imagine we have a door that goes down and we are having a hard time fixing it and getting it to operate correctly. This is costly because it means that there will be staff needed to "man the door." In Maintenance we are responsible for fixing things so that it doesn't add an additional cost to the Department. It's very challenging, but its kind of rewarding at the same time. I'm a fixer and I like to be able to take on an issue and have the feeling that I conquered it. We fixed it and it's a good feeling afterwards.





INMATES QUESTION PROSPECTIVE PROSECUTORS IN JAILHOUSE CAMPAIGN DEBATE

The following is an article featured in the New York Times and written by Katharine Q. Seelye.

June 26, 2018

BOSTON — District attorneys are usually the ones asking the questions of those who run afoul of the law: Where were you on this night? Why did you do it? Do you feel remorse?

But the tables were turned on Tuesday at a rather unusual candidate debate for six people campaigning to become Boston's chief prosecutor. The scene was a county jail and the interrogators were inmates in prison garb — soft cotton scrubs, some blue, some brown, some orange, depending on the status of their cases.

Their questions for the prospective prosecutors showed insider knowledge of the criminal justice system: Why is there so much pressure on inmates to take plea bargains rather than go to trial? Should undocumented women be deported if they are convicted of nonviolent crimes? With the rise in geriatric inmates, do you support medical marijuana in jail?

Sitting just a few feet from the candidates, relieved of handcuffs or other restraints, the inmates listened intently as candidates sought to portray themselves as fair-minded. And when it was over, those on the inside were thrilled to have participated in this ritual of democracy.

"I hope our voices are heard," said Eric Miller, 46, who is accused of possession of a firearm. He asked the candidates about justice and said afterward that misfortune was to blame for many of the charges the inmates faced.

Ashley McSween, 32, who is being held on larceny charges, asked about how best to help women inmates who are addicted to opioids re-enter society. "Getting the answers straight from them was A-plus," she said.

The debate, held at the Suffolk County House of Correction, was organized by the American Civil Liberties Union and the local sheriff's department. It was billed as the first political debate in the country to take place inside a jail. On the receiving end of the grilling were five Democrats and one independent seeking to become the next district attorney for Suffolk County, which covers Boston and three surrounding communities.

For the A.C.L.U., the event was designed to shine a light on the job of district attorney, one frequently in national headlines because of police shootings, an exploding drug crisis and the swelling activism of groups like Black Lives Matter.

"This forum happening in a city jail in front of people who are incarcerated represents the growing focus nationwide on holding prosecutors accountable," said Udi Ofer, a lawyer and deputy national political director of the A.C.L.U.

The A.C.L.U. is advocating criminal justice reforms in district attorney races in 15 states. It was hosting another debate on Tuesday in St. Louis County, Mo., the jurisdiction of Ferguson, where Michael Brown was fatally shot by a white police officer in 2014. Prosecutors declined to file charges against the officer.

"Prosecutors are the most powerful, unaccountable and least transparent actors in the criminal justice system," Mr. Ofer said. "They exercise tremendous discretion and have enormous power — they decide who to charge, what kind of charges to bring, what plea deals to offer."

As with many political races around the country this year, this one has drawn a surprisingly crowded field. The current district attorney, Daniel F. Conley, who is not seeking re-election, was first elected in 2002 and then re-elected without opposition for three more terms. In the last 20 years, more than three-fourths of the district attorney races in Massachusetts have been uncontested.

Many of this year's district attorney candidates, here and elsewhere, have a liberal agenda. Some were inspired by the landslide election last year in Philadelphia of a longtime civil rights lawyer, Lawrence Krasner, who had no background as a prosecutor and promised a total overhaul of the system.

Steven Tompkins, the Suffolk County sheriff, said Tuesday's debate was an extension of his efforts to engage the inmates in civic discourse. Of the 1,000 inmates in the house of correction, he said as the debate opened, 42 percent have some form of mental illness and 70 percent have an alcohol or drug problem.

"These are folks who should be somewhere else," he said. If inmates were committing crimes to feed the illness of addiction, he added, the system needed to reconsider how it treated them.

The inmates who attended the debate volunteered to do so. The men and women were separated, with 14 men on one side of an ordinary, low-ceilinged meeting room with fluorescent lights, and 11 women on the other. All are registered to vote.

Most of the candidates sought to relate their life experiences to those of the inmates — not the sort of candidate response one would hear if such a debate were held at the chamber of commerce.

"I look out at all of you and understand the dilemmas you face," said Linda Champion, a lawyer, who described herself as a formerly homeless teenager who struggled through life with an immigrant mother who had been abused by her father.

Rachael Rollins, a lawyer, said that she was the oldest of five and that three of her siblings had been in prison. "I don't look at you as defendants, like some up here," she said, adding that she had received a call that morning telling her that a cousin had died of an overdose. Evandro Carvalho, a state representative, said he was arrested at age 17 and had a criminal record. He thanked God for helping him find his way and concluded by asking the inmates, "When will you have another opportunity to elect someone that has these experiences?"











COMMON GROUND



MAINTENANCE DIVISION

OF THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

