



COMMON GROUND

JUNE 2019 ISSUE

PARTNER OF THE MONTH
THE WHITTIER STREET
HEALTH CENTER

SCSD HOSTS
FAMILY MATTERS
CONSORTIUM TOUR



MEET THE OFFICERS OF THE SCSD'S
EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Sheriff's Statement



If you've ever heard me speak before, you know that I am a loud and persistent advocate for more and better mental health and recovery services for the people in our care and custody. Addiction and mental illness are prominent factors behind the criminal activity that drives more than seventy percent of our population through the criminal

justice system and into our facilities.

But, if you've heard me mention the above, then you've also heard me talk about the men and women who are entrusted with the care, custody and control of those remanded to the Suffolk County House of Correction and Suffolk County Jail. As I've said many times over, the work of corrections professionals is widely unsung and often as thankless as it is challenging, both physically and mentally. This is particularly true when you consider the stresses that come along with caring for a population that presents with so many disparate, difficult issues.

To try and alleviate some of the stresses and pressures of the job for custody and non-custody personnel alike, the Department employs a six-person Employee Assistance Program (EAP) made up of officers from both facilities. The EAP team can not only provide private, confidential off-site services like counseling for mental health assistance, substance use disorder, marital and family issues, and many others, but each of them are also steeped in the unique experience of working in the world of corrections, providing a critical layer of context to their efforts in assisting the people in need of their help.

You can read more about the Department's EAP, in addition to several other items of note, in the following pages.

— Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins

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SCSD PARTNER OF THE MONTH: THE WHITTIER STREET HEALTH CENTER



Meet Robert Edwards, men's health case manager for the Whittier Street Health Center and this issue's "Partner of the Month."

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Learn about the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's team of officers who are tasked with maintaining the mental and physical wellbeing of the SCSD workforce.

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COMMON GROUND NEWSLETTER

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PARTNER OF THE MONTH

Robert Edwards
Whittier Street Health Center

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department's "Partner of the Month" series highlights the outside agencies and organizations that are working with us to help improve the lives and increase opportunities for the men and women remanded to our care and custody by the courts. Each month, we will highlight these collaborations between our organizations and shed light on some of the ways in which we are readying people to reenter their communities better prepared to provide for themselves and their families.

In recognition of Men's Health Month, we feature our community partner Robert Edwards who is the Men's Health Case Manager at Whittier Street Health Center. Whittier Street Health Center provides high quality, reliable and accessible primary care and support services for diverse populations to promote wellness and eliminate health and social disparities. Mr. Edwards connects with the community in a number of ways, including his visits behind the wall at both the House of Correction and the Suffolk County Jail where he provides knowledge to the men who no longer have health care and are looking for the support to help them to find new providers. He is also engaged in other community outreach programs to connect with clients.

"Think of Whittier Street as a one-stop shop where you can come in for your primary care, wellness programs, eye and dental care, and behavioral health services," said Mr. Edwards. "Our 'walk-in' clinic is open and pediatric patients will always be seen, even without an appointment."



When asked to state one thing that makes Whittier Street Health Center stand out from other health centers, Mr. Edwards said, "We care for everyone, regardless of insurance coverage or ability to pay. If you do not have insurance, we will help you enroll or re-enroll in the right plan. Because insurance plans can be complicated, our staff will work with you until your application is approved. Our medical team and staff are ranked among the finest in delivering comprehensive health care based on your needs and those of your community."

Though Robert Edwards is a men's health case manager, he is quick to point out that Whittier Street Health Center also has two different locations with different departments focusing on a variety of services for men, women, teens and children including: Adult Medicine, Women's Health, Men's Health, Pediatrics, Teen Clinic, LGBTQ Health, Refugee Assessment and Post-Prison Release Program, in addition to several others.

To learn more about Whittier Street Health Center, visit: www.wshc.org or schedule a visit.

SUPPORTING THE SCSD: THE SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)



The work of the corrections professional is unlike that of any other occupation, with its very specific set of demands and dangers, and a unique range of stressors that only those working behind the walls experience.

While the job itself can be a rewarding one with good pay and benefits, and an opportunity to be part of a special kind of camaraderie, it is also a career that is both mentally and physically challenging, with the potential for residual effects that can sometimes affect people in the workplace and beyond.

Serving both custody and non-custody staff members, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department offers its Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to help minister to anyone in need with a multitude of programmatic options.

Located off-site and away from the premises of the Sheriff's Department's main facilities, the EAP provides free confidential and private counseling and service referrals to any Department member who needs them. This service helps employees recognize the stresses and other issues that can have a negative impact on their mental health, and works to address these issues before they become larger problems. To ensure that employees can always

avail themselves of a wide array of mental and behavioral health services, the EAP also maintains a good working relationship with similar programs offered by other law enforcement agencies throughout the Commonwealth.

Among the many issues that the EAP can help to address include: on the job stressors, personal stressors such as relationship and family difficulties, grief, substance and alcohol use, gambling, PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), and a host of others.

Members of the Department are chosen for service with the Employee Assistance Program based on their possession of several key characteristics, which include: compassion, listening skills, the ability to exercise discretion and confidentiality, and the desire to help others.

Comprised of six officers – four from the Suffolk County House of Correction and two from the Suffolk County Jail – the Department's EAP team is staffed by Sergeant Marcherie Wooten, Officer Joseph Bearne, Officer Kathleen Delaney (not pictured in the story), Officer William Farrell, Officer Thanh Tran, and Officer Eric Washington, each of whom stand at the ready to assist any and all members of the Department.

Can you briefly describe what you do as an EAP officer and talk about some of the pressures of the job that you help people manage?

William Farrell - As members of EAP, we help SCSD employees and their family members with issues and concerns that might have a negative effect on their job, and get them connected with the proper resources. We help employees to recognize stresses like PTSD, heart disease, divorce, Substance Use Disorder, in addition to others, and how they can affect their personal lives and families so that they can create ‘good’ routines, habits, and self-care techniques that can keep them happy and healthy.

Kathleen Delaney - Life pressures affect people differently. One thing that became apparent early in my EAP service was that no one should ever make assumptions. For example, there are people who cast the appearance – usually via conversation – that they have an ideal home life when in reality, it’s the opposite. This applies to all facets of stress. One of the most important factors regarding change is acceptance of the problem itself.

What do you do to decompress after the work that you do?

Marcherie Wooten - I’m a firm believer in keeping positive outlets outside of the work place, meaning friends and/or family members that you can be around and talk with.

Joseph Bearne - I tend to lean on my fellow EAP peers when I need to talk about something or may be going through something myself. When it comes to decompressing, I like to take the dog for a walk or go out and run around with my kids or fire up the smoker and cook.

What are some of the resources available to people in need of further help (alcohol & drug use, mental health needs, etc.)?

Joseph Bearne - We have all kinds of resources for a large variety of situations. We make a lot of contacts through all the trainings we go to. Additionally, depending on what the issue is, where you live and what insurance you have may dictate some of the other services that we can offer you. We also deal with some nonprofit places for our veterans that don’t necessarily need insurance. We work with places such as Home Base (veterans), Mclean Hospital, AdCare, and Brattleboro Retreat just to name a few.

Marcherie Wooten - We have lots of resources between the House of Correction and Jail within our reach. We have facilities that are designed with our line of work in mind and are specifically for us with private entrances and



registration areas.

What are some of the things that make you most proud to be an EAP officer?

William Farrell - Being able to see our fellow employees’ lives begin to change for the better after utilizing the resources available to them.

Eric Washington - When an officer or staff member sees me or calls me and says ‘thank you for your assistance’ and you can see the positive effect that you’ve had in helping them to overcome a difficult time in their lives.

What should people to know about EAP, going through tough times or about the work that you do?

Eric Washington - I’d like everyone to know that all of the members of EAP are dedicated to the program and assisting everyone. Whatever your issue is, if you want the help, we’re there for you.

Kathleen Delaney - You’re not alone. In times of stress people often feel they carry the weight of the world and that their problem is unmanageable. Whatever the dilemma, others have faced it and won. You are never alone.

To reach members of the SCSD EAP team, visit the SCSD Intranet for employees and click the “Services” tab for a list of contact numbers.



Employee Profile: Sergeant Marcherie Wooten

Sergeant Marcherie Wooten has served in a multitude of capacities here at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department over a span of nearly twenty years on the job.

Having spent time working in housing units, the Booking and Records divisions, staffing the front lobby, housing control booths, the back gate, Central Control, and other key locations inside the Suffolk County Jail, Sgt. Wooten has since added to her responsibilities taking on the role of an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) officer for the Department. The EAP is a team made up of Department officers that provides confidential and private counseling and service referrals for any Department member – custody or non-custody – who may need them.

“The Employee Assistance Program is here to help employees and families,” said Sgt. Wooten. “Our role as EAP officers is to help members of the Department to maintain positive mental and physical health, because the work of corrections can be pretty stressful. Sometimes, that stress can stay with you and affect you in ways that can lead to even more stress at home for employees and their families. We try to help people to try and cope with everything from on-the-job pressures, family relationship issues, alcohol and drug dependence – really, anything that can have a negative effect on them and their families.”

According to Sgt. Wooten, it is this ability to assist her fellow officers and co-workers, providing some relief during what might be a particularly difficult time that she most appreciates about her work in EAP.

“It’s really a great feeling when you can see that person who comes to you for help and they come out on the other side,” said Sgt. Wooten. “It’s awesome. It’s fabulous.”

In addition to her work in EAP, Sgt. Wooten is also a member of the Department’s Hostage Negotiation team, and still carries all of the responsibility that is expected of her rank: conducting supervisory rounds in each assigned unit, maintaining a running log book, answering questions from unit officers, responding to different requests, handling any emergency situations as required, and a variety of other tasks.

“This profession is challenging,” Sgt. Wooten says in a manner that is both matter-of-fact and intentionally understated. “You have to keep a positive attitude to try and make the job more pleasant, because it’s an inherently negative environment. Every day, you’re dealing with people who are forced to be here by the courts who don’t want to be here. When we see them, they’re not at their best. Some people are detoxing, some people are acting out because they’re away from their families and their children. Others are in need of psychiatric care and mental health services. Then, because of the nature of this job, you’re here all day and sometimes have to stay on to cover extra shifts in overtime. Officers often need support from outside, from family and friends to keep that positive attitude.”

Speaking about the people who from time-to-time may need a little extra help, particularly when those outside support systems are also under strain, the conversation inevitably returns to EAP and its importance to both the workplace and the home front.

“I’m human, like everyone else,” says Sgt. Wooten, speaking about maintaining the balance between getting the job done and acknowledging the natural limitations that we all face. “I feel the same way that many of my fellow officers do – you see and experience difficult things, then you pick yourself up and keep going. But, like I said, it’s a difficult job.”

“It’s a good job, the benefits are good and there are great people here who have helped me to become who I am here, as they have others. But, sooner or later we can all use a little help, whether it be from family members, our spouses, friends or sometimes from EAP. We’ve been through the trenches, we’ve been through what you’ve been through and we’re here for the people who need us.”

AROUND SUFFOLK COUNTY

SHERIFF TOMPKINS STANDS WITH OFFICERS IN FIGHT OVER PAY PARITY

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins stood in solidarity with correction officers from across Massachusetts who gathered at the Massachusetts State House to rally for pay parity. A large, united group of correction officers representing the fourteen county Sheriffs were joined by members of organized labor, including the Massachusetts Correction Officers Federated Union and the Building Trades Workers; Senator Walter Timilty and Senator Paul Feeney; Representative James Hawkins; and Sheriffs Thomas Hodgson of Bristol County and Jerry McDermott of Norfolk County for the rally that was held before they entered the State House to testify and advocate on behalf of other county correction officers. Bills H.2073, H.3441 and S.1409 would establish parity among county and Department of Correction officers, ensuring that they receive the same pay scale and pay rates as their state counterparts.



SCSD WELCOMES FAMILY MATTERS CONSORTIUM FOR HOC TOUR

The Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently welcomed a group of participants in the Family Matters Community Consortium Initiative for a tour of the Suffolk County House of Correction. Family Matters is a voluntary program that was developed to assist inmates and their families in working toward positive relationships that strengthen the family unit, reunify inmates with their children while incarcerated, and connect families to support services where needed. The Community Consortium Initiative, a series of meetings for service providers, was created to foster community connected practice with the intention of building resources to serve and strengthen the families of the incarcerated.



SCSD LENDS SUPPORT TO FAMILY ORGANIZATIONS

Members of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department took part in Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) Head Start's "End of the Year Celebration" on the Boston Common recently. Department staff gave away "Sheriff's Safety Tips" coloring books, crayons and "Junior Deputy" badges to the many celebrants in attendance. The event also marked the start of summer for thousands of children, with field day activities and a resource fair for Head Start families, friends and supporters. For more than 50 years, Action for Boston Community Development's Head Start has served tens of thousands of Boston children from low-income and disadvantaged families. To learn more about the ABCD Headstart Program, visit: bostonabcd.org.





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Steven W. Tompkins, Sheriff



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