



COMMON GROUND

AUGUST 2020 ISSUE



Department Brings
US Senate Forum
Behind The Walls

Department Celebrates
HiSET Graduates

SCSD K-9 Tuco Outfitted With Protective Vest



SHERIFF'S STATEMENT

GREETINGS,

As employees of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, the men and women in our facilities take on the twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week responsibility of maintaining the care and custody of the people who are remanded to our facilities by the courts. As we work to ensure the safety, security and health of our incarcerated population and that of our employees, contractors and visitors, we take great efforts to deliver the kinds of training

and tools that will put people in the best positions possible for success. This includes the wellbeing of our K-9 Division officers' furry, four-legged partners, as you'll read about in our cover story.

In addition, you'll read about our ongoing efforts to foster civic engagement and participation among both our incarcerated population and elected officials with our recent United States Senate forum at the House of Correction with Senator Ed Markey and Congressman Joe Kennedy.

We also feature one of our HiSET classes as they participated in graduation exercises during a special ceremony; we highlight some of the dental services made available by the Department to people in our care and custody; and several other items of interest.

I hope that you'll enjoy reading about these topics and more in this edition. 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

SANDY ZAMOR CALIXTE - CHIEF
PETER VANDELFT - EDITOR
OLIVIA SMITH - EDITOR
DAVID HILL - PHOTOGRAPHER
VONEL LAMOUR - DESIGNER

SHERIFF STEVEN W. TOMPKINS

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PHONE .617-704-6688

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SHERIFF TOMPKINS, DEPARTMENT HOST US SENATE FORUM AT HOC

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins invited United States Senate candidates Senator Edward Markey and Congressman Joe Kennedy, III into the Suffolk County House of Correction to participate in a forum held for a group of incarcerated men and women.

Comprised of ten women and ten men, the group stood before each candidate to ask a series of questions that they prepared in advance of the event. Addressing everything from police brutality, parole and probation, CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information), slavery and reparations, facial recognition software, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), unemployment due to COVID-19, term limits, equality, and a vast array of additional topics, participants brought a combination of thoughtfulness, intensity and nuance to the forum that elicited expansive and often spontaneous responses from the candidates.

Part of an ongoing initiative designed by Sheriff Tompkins, the forum was created to both promote civic participation among the Department's in-custody population, and bring candidates for elected office behind the walls to listen to the often-unheard voices and concerns of system-involved men and women. This civic-engagement program began back in 2018 when Sheriff Tompkins and the Department hosted a debate-styled forum featuring six candidates who were then competing to win the seat of Suffolk County District Attorney. The Department also made history when it welcomed members of the Boston City Council into the House of Correction on two separate occasions for two city council hearings, a first for both the City of Boston and, at the time, for the nation.

"As anyone who has ever met me knows, I am an extremely vocal proponent of civic engagement," said Sheriff Tompkins. "It is crucially important, now more than at any point in our lifetimes, that we all have a seat at the table and a voice in the process that decides who we collectively aspire to be as a country, and what direction we're going to take to get there."

"We need to hear from everybody," Sheriff Tompkins continued, "particularly from people who have not typically had a consistent voice. Conversely, we also need the people who are seeking to represent us in government to hear from all of the people, wherever they might be, and to become well-versed in all of the issues and responsive to their entire electorate."

To watch a recording of the event, visit the Department's Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/SCSDMA and click the video titled "SCSD Town Hall."



SHERIFF TOMPKINS, DEPARTMENT CELEBRATE HiSET GRADUATES

The Department recently celebrated a group of in-custody participants of the HiSET (High School Equivalency Test) program. The men participated in a graduation ceremony presided over by Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins, who spoke to the graduates, and also featured Special Sheriff and House of Correction Superintendent Yolanda Smith, Director of Education Jim Dizio and guest speaker and former House of Correction Superintendent, former Norfolk County Sheriff's Department Superintendent and current University of Massachusetts adjunct professor Gerard Horgan.

Gerard Horgan, who began his speech with a quote from Shonda Rhimes, television producer, film writer and author, said, "A lot of people are busy dreaming, but some people are busy doing. Happy people are busy doing, successful people are busy doing, engaged people are busy doing and powerful people are busy doing." He also stated that they, too, had been busy doing, which resulted in their individual and collective achievement of this tremendous accomplishment.

Mr. Horgan then asked the graduates to use some adjectives to describe celebrities like Beyonce, Jay-Z, Mark Wahlberg and Drake. Graduates offered such adjectives as: "powerful," "successful," "determined" and "hard-working." Mr. Horgan revealed that the point of his question was to let the men know these celebrities, and many others, had GED's (General Education Degrees) as well. He wanted to reassure the graduates that they had the ability to be just as successful, despite the challenges and adversity that they've experienced in their lives.

The graduation would not have been possible without the leadership and guidance of Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Director of Education Jim Dizio and the entire Education Division. Despite the limitations imposed by the implementation of COVID-19 health and safety protocols, members of the Department still worked tirelessly with the men in the program to prepare them to earn their High School Equivalency certificates. Though family and friends of the graduating class were not able to be physically present for the graduation due to the COVID-19 protocols, the Department broadcast the ceremony on Facebook Live to enable everyone to experience the joyous occasion in real time.

On behalf of Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Department, we would like to congratulate all of the graduates on their hard work. Remember that being incarcerated is temporary, and only represents a single chapter in your book. Your complete stories are still unwritten, and in order to have a comeback, you must have a setback.



SUFFOLK COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT K-9 TUCO RECEIVES DONATION OF BODY ARMOR

Suffolk County Sheriff's Department K-9 Tuco has received a bullet and stab-protective vest thanks to a charitable donation from non-profit organization Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. K-9 Tuco's vest was sponsored by a fundraiser hosted by Chase Farm Vet Hospital of North Dartmouth, MA and embroidered with the sentiment "Gifted by Chase Farm Veterinary Hospital".

The recipient of this donation, Tuco, is a single-purpose Narcotics detection K-9 German Shepherd who is handled by Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Sergeant Mike Carbonneau.

"Having a vest for Tuco is a necessary piece of equipment that we all hope is never needed," said Sergeant Carbonneau. "It's something we should all have regardless of whether we're on two legs or four. And, the fact that companies and businesses make donations on our behalf so we can be provided with them is pretty special."

"Being on K-9 is my dream job, and has been since I started working for the Department over sixteen years ago," Sgt. Carbonneau continued. "I'm very grateful to Sheriff Tompkins for giving me this opportunity. I work and train with amazing people. Lieutenant [Corey] Lewis and Sergeant [Tim] Frates in particular have helped and guided me in ways that I am simply not able explain how appreciative I am of them. Working and training with people that are more knowledgeable and more experienced in an area that you're passionate about is amazing. K-9 isn't just a job, it's a lifestyle."

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc., established in 2009, is a 501(c)(3) charity whose mission is to provide bullet and stab-protective vests and other assistance to dogs of law enforcement and related agencies throughout the United States. This potentially lifesaving body armor for four-legged K-9 officers is U.S. made, custom fitted, and NIJ certified. Since its inception, Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. has provided over 3,917 vests to K-9s in all 50 states at a value of \$6.9 million, made possible by both private and corporate donations.

The program is open to U.S. dogs that are at least 20 months old, actively employed and certified with law enforcement or related agencies. K-9s with expired vests are also eligible to participate. There are an estimated 30,000 law enforcement K-9s throughout the United States.

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. accepts tax-deductible contributions in any amount, while a single donation of \$960 will sponsor one vest. Each vest has a value of \$1,744-\$2,283, weighs an average of 4-5 lb., and comes with a five-year warranty. For more information, or to learn about volunteer opportunities, please call 508-824-6978. Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. provides information, lists events, and accepts donations at www.vik9s.org, or you may mail your contribution to P.O. Box 9, East Taunton, MA 02718.



SUFFOLK COUNTY JAIL DENTAL TEAM BRINGS EXPERIENCE, SMILES TO DEPARTMENT

We recently visited with members of the Department's dental services team at the Suffolk County Jail and spoke with Dr. Richard Sharp and dental assistant Marissa Pimental. Sharing space with the Department's optometrist, Dr. Sharp and Marissa gave us a quick tour of their office, which included all of the tools of the trade that one might expect to find in any typical dentist's office. Complete with everything needed to perform extractions, fillings, and simple cleanings, the office also includes its own X-ray machine.

During our time together, Dr. Sharp and Marissa spoke about their respective journeys that led them to the Department. Dr. Sharp has been a dentist for forty years, and owned his own practice for twenty-four years. He recently transitioned to work at the Jail just six months ago, and stated that he has really enjoyed the change. Marissa has been working in dentistry for over twenty-five years now, and said that working at the Jail has been an answer to her prayers. In her previous work, she says that she often sought the opportunity to work for an agency that would allow her to help people and make a difference. Marissa feels that she has found the perfect opportunity at the Jail, particularly because she is also a strong believer that everyone deserves a second chance.

Dr. Sharp and Marissa work twelve-hour shifts, two days per-week and perform approximately ten to twelve procedures daily, working from a list of patients that need to be seen. The list allows Dr. Sharp to make a schedule ahead of time, which ensures that everyone is seen and given the proper attention. Dr. Sharp and Marissa often devote different parts of their time to scheduled procedures, and sick calls and minor issues. Dr. Sharp performs all of the required procedures (i.e. extractions, fillings and cleanings), while Marissa prepares all of the things that Dr. Sharp will need for each procedure, assists him during his work, and also teaches patients proper oral hygiene techniques, which include brushing and flossing.



When asked about whether COVID-19 has affected their general responsibilities and practices, Dr. Sharp stated that not much had changed.

"Dentists have always treated infectious diseases," he said. "We have always worn personal protective equipment, such as a face shield, gloves, masks, etc. We disinfect the office frequently, and clean the chair after each patient."

Though neither of the two have come across any real challenges, stating that this is in part because they work well together and are both passionate about dentistry, they both agreed that a degree of difficulty can sometimes be added to the equation when the schedule that they have prepared in the previous week is suddenly altered due to circumstances beyond their control. Marissa also added that, "when the patient is in discomfort, it can sometimes be challenging to perform the work."

Overall, however, both Dr. Sharp and Marissa spoke about how good it feels to be able to help others while performing the work that they love, and looked forward to continuing that work for a long time to come.





SCSD'S LT. CABRERA FEATURED IN DOCUMENTARY ABOUT WOMEN'S PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL TEAM

Recently, Suffolk County Sheriff's Department Lieutenant Jessica Cabrera was featured in the documentary film, "Born To Play."

The film chronicles the story of the Boston Renegades – a professional women's football team – and their quest for redemption following a regular season in which they logged a perfect record, only to fall short in the national championship game.

A trainer and instructor at the Department's Correction Officer Training Academy in Chelsea, Lt. Cabrera amassed an impressive twenty-one-year career as a football player, winning three national championships along the way.

According to Lt. Cabrera, the film not only captures the daunting universal challenges faced by professional athletes attempting to maintain peak performance in pursuit of excellence, but it also documents the struggle for respect and acceptance faced by women in sports.

"The documentary has been so surreal for me," said Lieutenant Jessica Cabrera. "Every opportunity I get to watch

it, I take advantage of, and the same goes for my teammates. Every single time, I get goose bumps and shed a tear or two."

In the film, which includes riveting in-game footage and personal interviews with members of the team, we see Lt. Cabrera in her current role as an assistant coach for the Renegades, having since transitioned from the field to the bench. Lt. Cabrera lends her knowledge and experience to the team as they embark on their mission to return to championship form in an attempt to reclaim past glory and redeem their near-perfect season.

Do they succeed? Find out for yourself by watching "Born To Play" and taking the journey with Lt. Cabrera and the Renegades. You can stream the film by Googling, "Born To Play, ESPN," and clicking on the link.

Speaking about the great support that director Viridiana Lieberman has given to both the team and to a sport that gets comparatively little attention next to their male counterparts, Lt. Cabrera said, "It's been great to finally get the spotlight and recognition, not only for the team, but for women's football. We still have a long way to go, though."



PARTNER OF THE MONTH:

LINDA MELLO & REVEREND CLOVIS TURNER OF DORCHESTER BAY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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 some 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 this issue's installment of our "Partner of the Month" series, we feature Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation (DBEDC) Re-entry/Job Placement Consultant Linda Mello and Re-entry Program Consultant Reverend Clovis Turner.

Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation works collaboratively with residents, businesses and their many partners to bring about long-lasting positive change to the Dorchester communities. Through their real estate development, community organizing and economic development efforts, they strive to build stronger neighborhoods, empower individuals and foster economic justice and opportunity.

When asked why economic development is so important to Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, Linda stated, "Because our service area in the Uphams Corner section of Dorchester

and surrounding communities is home to some of the most vulnerable populations in Boston. Over twenty-five percent of residents are low income (living below area median income) and fifteen percent are unemployed (prior to COVID-19). DBEDC's mission is to build a strong, thriving and diverse community in Boston's Dorchester neighborhoods. Our goal is to create and sustain economic development opportunities in Dorchester for businesses and individuals."

In 2008, Dorchester Bay committed resources to develop a reentry program. The Second Chance Act provided financial support for Dorchester Bay's initial engagement with the Suffolk County House of Correction. The relationship grew with the hiring of reentry staff to visit the Suffolk County House of Correction to work with incarcerated individuals scheduled for release. Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, altering the delivery of outside services, both Linda and Reverend Clovis attended monthly Discharge & Recovery Panels at the Suffolk County House of Correction and Suffolk County Jail. These panels were created to cater to men and women who will be reentering to their communities in 90 days or less.

"Dorchester Bay's Re-entry Program connects returning citizens to supportive services that foster stabilization," said Rev. Clovis. "We provide assistance with employment services, training, and apprenticeships, to name just a few of the services provided by the re-entry team."

Linda and Reverend Clovis work closely together on pre-release outreach to incarcerated individuals by offering post-release jobs and training placements, as well as referrals to other support services. They provide continued support through follow-up and periodic check-in calls.

When asked why these services make the Dorchester Bay Reentry Program so unique, Linda stated, "This wrap around support is critical to program participants' successful return to the community. Since 2008, the Dorchester Bay Reentry Program has assisted over 600 clients in receiving job skills training, and finding employment."

For more information visit:
www.dbedc.org.

