



COMMON GROUND

JUNE 2021 ISSUE

MAKING HISTORY!



SHERIFF TOMPKINS HOSTS FIRST-EVER

MAYORAL FORUM AT THE HOUSE
OF CORRECTION

SHERIFF'S STATEMENT

June 2021



Greetings,

As many of you know, I am an ardent proponent of civic engagement, community activism, social responsibility, and utilizing the power of the vote. You may also know, then, that I am as passionate a believer that this should extend to the men and women in the care and custody of our correctional institutions. Many in our population are already disenfranchised, and voting, making your voice heard, is crucial to empowerment which, in turn, helps to create communities that are safer, healthier and more vibrant for everyone.

With this in mind, I invited the candidates vying to be the next elected Mayor of the City of Boston into the House of Correction, where they assembled together for the first time, for an historic forum in which they spoke with and fielded questions from members of our population who they would be representing, should they be chosen to lead the city in November. You can read about our forum in these pages and you can watch the recording of the forum on our Department Facebook Page at: <https://fb.watch/60NAQ6U4G4>.

In this issue, which is released in the month that also celebrates Father's Day, we highlight two programs that are aimed at helping incarcerated fathers to become better parents to their children. With our Nurturing Fathers Program, run in conjunction with the Family Nurturing Center, and our Bags For Dads Program, which we do with Fathers' Uplift, it is our great hope that the participants of these programs not only become role models for their children, but catalysts for positive change in our communities by helping to break the cycle of incarceration experienced by far too many.

I hope that you'll enjoy reading about these and other topics in this edition, and 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

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SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT HOSTS HISTORIC MAYORAL FORUM

Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Department welcomed the six candidates vying to be elected as the Mayor of the City of Boston to the House of Correction for a first-of-its-kind forum.

SCSD HOLDS GRADUATION FOR NURTURING FATHERS

The Department recognized the accomplishments of members of the Nurturing Fathers Program, run in conjunction with the Family Nurturing Center, during a special graduation held at the House of Correction.

PARTNER OF THE MONTH: FATHERS' UPLIFT

This month, the Department's Partner of the Month series features our collaborators in the "Bags For Dads" program, Fathers' Uplift.



AROUND SUFFOLK COUNTY

In this month's trip around the county, we highlight Sheriff Tompkins' role in Roxbury Community College's 45th Annual Commencement exercises as the RCC Chairman of the Board of Trustees; the return of the "Ask Me Anything: Vaccinations" panel; and Sheriff Tompkins's participation in Reverend Liz Walker's podcast "Just Between Us."

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, NURTURING FATHERS PROGRAM CELEBRATE GRADUATES FOR COMMITMENT TO BETTER PARENTING



The Nurturing Father's Program at the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department promotes the importance of fathers being in the home, engaged and empowered to nurture and develop their families.

The program brings together men from all family circumstances (custodial, non-custodial, step-fathers, new fathers) to explore what it takes to be their child's nurturer and teacher. Fathers learn that providing loving praise and a nurturing and secure environment is crucial to their children in gaining self-esteem and confidence.

This past May, nine participants of this program completed their ten-week course with the Family Matter's staff, capping it off with a graduation ceremony that was broadcast on Facebook Live so that their families could participate in their achievements. With special remarks from Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and Nurturing Fathers Program Director John O'Neil, the men were congratulated for their efforts and encouraged to put their newfound skills to work upon their return home.

Addressing the men in the program, Sheriff Tompkins said, "Today, looking

at you gentlemen who have gone through this program, the fact that you have made a commitment to not only improve your station in life, but as many of you have referenced earlier, to take care of your families is something that I find to be the good in humanity and I applaud you for that."

"I want to congratulate the graduates," said John O'Neil, echoing the sentiments of pride and happiness expressed by Sheriff Tompkins and members of the staff. "You guys are part of something special here. Most men want to be good fathers. And just because you're in prison, incarcerated, doesn't mean that you can't be a good father or you don't want to be a good father. We grow and learn from our mistakes as we go through life and hopefully you've learned from this program how to be better fathers. The role that you play as fathers is indispensable for the healthy development of children."

As each participant of the program took turns speaking to the assembly and the audience watching virtually, it was clear that the program's mission resonated with and inspired its student body.

"I want to be the kind of father who is so dedicated and devoted to being a good parent that even their friends who are unfortunate to not have fathers are inspired by me," said one graduate. "I want to raise respectful and hardworking kids. Resilient kids who know that anything that they want to do is possible to achieve. I want them to confide and trust in me, no matter what they're going through."

Closing out the ceremony, Supervisor of the Department's Reintegration Division David Mayo spoke about the men and their collective journey.

"The men from this cohort have shown a tremendous amount of passion, growth and development around what it means to be a Nurturing Father, to not only their kids, but to loved ones as well," said Mayo. "These men have overcome great obstacles of cultural trauma and abuse and have shown their peers that there is also hope."

To learn more about the Nurturing Fathers Program, visit:
www.familynurturing.org/nurturing-fathers/

SHERIFF TOMPKINS, DEPARTMENT HOLD HISTORIC FORUM AT HOUSE OF CORRECTION FOR BOSTON MAYORAL CANDIDATES



Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department recently welcomed the slate of candidates vying to be the next elected Mayor of the City of Boston to the Suffolk County House of Correction for an historic, first-of-its-kind event.

Sitting for questions composed and presented by members of the population, the six candidates became the only mayoral candidates to take their campaigns inside a correctional institution for the purpose of meeting the voting-eligible men and women within the facility. It was also the first time that the entire field of candidates appeared in one place together for a forum, with Acting Mayor Kim Janey, Former City of Boston Director of Economic Development John Barros, District 4 Boston City Councilor Andrea Campbell, At-Large Boston City Councilor Annissa Essaibi George, State Representative Jon Santiago, and At-Large Boston City Councilor Michelle

Wu sitting alongside each other as they fielded questions from the men and women in attendance.

Hosted and moderated by Sheriff Tompkins, the forum also welcomed special guest Suffolk County District Attorney Rachael Rollins. DA Rollins had been a member of the first of this series of groundbreaking panels in June of 2018, when the six candidates running for Suffolk County District Attorney sat before members of the voting-eligible population to answer questions and make their individual cases for election to the position. And, in July of 2020, the Department held another historic forum at the House of Correction with United States Senate candidates Edward Markey and Joseph Kennedy, III.

"These forums are important tools for encouraging civic engagement and providing access to the political process for the men and women in our population," said Sheriff Tompkins, speaking about the impetus for these "behind the walls"

forums. “These are critical opportunities through which we can try and remove one of the many obstacles for people who have already faced disenfranchisement and insure that they not only have the chance to be heard by the people who will represent them, but to help them to make informed decisions about choosing that representation.”

During the Mayoral Forum, question topics ranged from addiction, mental health, criminal justice, homelessness, police reform, income inequality and more, with each panelist showcasing their strengths and working to set themselves apart from their competitors in the eyes of the in-person and at-home audience.

Closing out the event with each candidate giving their final pitches, Sheriff Tompkins expressed his gratitude for their participation and hope for the future, even as he vented his frustration over the current circumstances that are driving many into his care and custody.

“I want to thank you for coming in to participate in this forum,” said Sheriff Tompkins. “Having you come in to talk to us about

what it is that you would do to effectuate some change, to bring some equity to the folks who are here and in our surrounding area is crucially important. We are arguably the biggest, baddest, most affluent nation on the planet and to have as many citizens as we do living on streets, to not have jobs, to be compromised by mental health and substance abuse issues... it’s embarrassing.”

“So, we’re looking at each and every one of you, and whoever wins, you’re going to have all of our support, because we need fairness, equity, homes, and jobs for the people in our care and custody and those in our communities.”

The Preliminary Municipal Election in which voters will choose the final two candidates for Mayor of Boston, in addition to Boston City Council and other local offices, will be held on September 14th, with the Municipal Election to choose Boston’s next Mayor set for November 2nd.

To watch the recording of the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department Mayoral Forum in its entirety, visit: <https://fb.watch/60NAQ6U4G4>





PARTNER OF THE MONTH

Leonard Tshitenge

Director of Coaching Services and Family Interventions, Fathers' Uplift, Inc.

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 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.

Leonard Tshitenge, Director of Coaching Services and Family Interventions at Fathers' Uplift, Inc. knows that supporting the families of our returning citizens is one of the best ways of ensuring success in transitioning from incarceration back into the community.

The importance of that goal and mission is evident in the latest partnership initiative between Fathers' Uplift and the Family Matters Program of the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department known as "Bags For Dads." This program provides Family Matters participants with free bags of supplies, that include food and resources like dress shirts, socks, toothbrushes, toothpaste and other toiletry items, which they can utilize in their transition post-incarceration.

As Leonard describes it, "We created 'Bags for Dads' to help fathers in the critical, immediate hours after their release, a time that is often pivotal in their transition from jail back to the community. By providing resources and connecting these men to positive influences immediately upon release, we are able to help guide the rest of a man's reentry journey. We created Bags for Dads to serve as a tool and opportunity in guiding and supporting fathers and men in the right direction immediately upon their release."

"Bags for Dads" is one of many programs and services offered

by Fathers' Uplift, Inc. In addition to meeting basic reentry needs, Fathers' Uplift, Inc. also provides broad-based case management for citizens recently released from prison, supportive services to the individual and their family members and children, and acting as a liaison with Probation and Parole as returning citizens work to comply with the conditions and mandates of their release.

For Leonard, the relationship formed between clients and Fathers' Uplift, Inc. is about more than just services.

"By providing material support to fathers and men immediately upon their release, we not only meet a degree of their physical needs, but we also share an important reminder. A Bag for a Dad is a signal to a man that they are not in this journey alone; that others care for them, wish to see them thrive, and are available to support them in their reentry journey. Between our Bags for Dads program and the rest of our reentry programming, we've seen one-year recidivism rates among our served dads of only 4%, roughly 1/3 of the general MA one-year recidivism rate."

Building on the success of these services is a challenge that Leonard and his agency look forward to in 2021 and beyond. As Leonard states, "We are attempting to provide at least 1,000 Bags for Dads to men experiencing reentry. Additionally, we will have an on-the-ground Ambassador program, our coaching programs and group workshops, and group and individual therapy, all offered in support of fathers as they begin their reentry journey. But, that engagement begins first with the small, important signal of support and advocacy found in the provision of a Bag for a Dad."

To learn more about Fathers' Uplift, visit:
<https://www.fathersuplift.org/>

AROUND SUFFOLK COUNTY

“ASK ME ANYTHING” RETURNS TO ENCOURAGE VACCINATIONS

The Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department recently welcomed back a group led by Reverend Liz Walker, Pastor of Roxbury Presbyterian Church, and two Harvard University medical students for a third round of the “Ask Me Anything” tour, a program that was created to help dispel inaccuracies about and encourage taking the COVID-19 vaccine among inmates and detainees. This session, the group, joined by Superintendent Yolanda Smith and a member of the Wellpath medical team, focused on members of the population from the Department’s Women’s Units. Previously, Reverend Walker visited the HOC for three sessions with incarcerated men and women, and the Suffolk County Jail for three sessions with groups of detainees.



SHERIFF TOMPKINS JOINS “JUST BETWEEN US” PODCAST TO TALK ABOUT FORGIVENESS, CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM

Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins joined the “Just Between Us” podcast, hosted by Reverend Liz Walker and Judelle Cummins to talk about criminal justice reform and the theme of “forgiveness.” A program powered by the Cory Johnson Program for Post Traumatic Healing, the podcast focuses on “the devastating impact of collective trauma on our world.” During the podcast, Sheriff Tompkins spoke about his past in learning forgiveness, and also spoke about the importance of healthcare, housing, employment, and education in the prevention of system involvement and recidivism.

Just
BETWEEN
US

WITH REV. LIZ WALKER
& JUDELLE CUMMINS

SHERIFF TOMPKINS JOINS COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES FOR ROXBURY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Recently, Suffolk County Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins helped to kick off the festivities at the 45th Commencement for Roxbury Community College (RCC). Taking the stage as RCC’s Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Sheriff Tompkins joined with RCC President, Dr. Valerie Roberson and members of the RCC faculty and community to deliver a special in-person ceremony held outside on the college campus. Reverend Dr. Ray Hammond, Chairman of the Roxbury Community College Foundation, delivered the Commencement Address for an excited and appreciative graduate class.





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Steven W. Tompkins, Sheriff



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