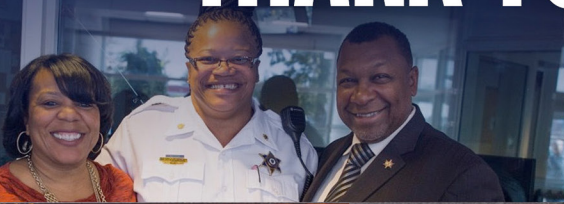




COMMON GROUND

JULY 2021 ISSUE

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE!



YOLANDA SMITH

SHERIFF'S STATEMENT

July 2021



Greetings,

I often refer to the people who work for the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department as "family."

Though we are all technically employees of the State of Massachusetts who are conscripted to work for the citizens of Suffolk County, I believe that the often difficult, intimate and sometimes dangerous job that we collectively do creates a kind of bond between all of us that is unique to professions like ours in and adjacent to law enforcement and criminal justice.

This month, we bid farewell to one of our "family" members who leaves the Department in pursuit of a new and exciting opportunity after serving with us for nearly thirty years. The cover story features some of the efforts and achievements of former Superintendent of the House of Correction, Special Sheriff and Chief of Staff Yolanda Smith.

We also present stories about our recent HiSET Graduation at the House of Correction for the incarcerated men and women participating in that program; a memorial held for fallen Officer Gregory Rector to present his family with a posthumous Medal of Honor Award; and the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association's decision to cut the cost of telephone calls for inmates and detainees; in addition to the return of our "Employee of the Month" column.

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

SANDY ZAMOR CALIXTE - CHIEF
PETER VAN DELFT - EDITOR
DAVID HILL - PHOTOGRAPHER
VONEL LAMOUR - DESIGNER

SHERIFF STEVEN W. TOMPKINS

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS AND EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

PHONE 517-704-6688

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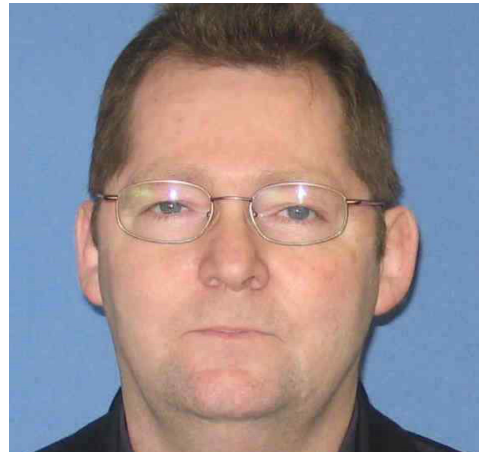


SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT BIDS FAREWELL TO FORMER SUPERINTENDENT

The Suffolk County Sheriff Department highlights some of the past achievements and history of outgoing Superintendent of the House of Correction Yolanda Smith.

DEPARTMENT HOLDS GRADUATION FOR HISET PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

The Department held a special graduation for members of the Education Division's HiSET Program.



CEREMONY HELD IN HONOR OF THE LATE OFFICER GREGORY RECTOR

The SCSD recently held a ceremony at the House of Correction to present the family of Officer Gregory Rector with a posthumous Medal of Honor Award.

EMPLOYEE PROFILE: MICHAEL GALLAGHER

The SCSD "Employee Profile" returns with a focus on Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of the House of Correction Michael Gallagher.

SPECIAL SHERIFF, SUPERINTENDENT SMITH BIDS FAREWELL TO SCSD AS SHE PREPARES FOR CAMPUS LIFE AT TUFTS UNIVERSITY AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SAFETY



After nearly three decades of service to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, Superintendent of the Suffolk County House of Correction Yolanda Smith announced to Department staff, partners and friends that she would be moving on to take a job with Tufts University as their Executive Director of Public Safety at the beginning of July.

She departs leaving the additional mantles of "Special Sheriff" and "Chief of Staff" behind, after having helped to successfully steer the Department through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ending of the institution's contract with Immigration and Customs Enforcement to house immigration detainees, the new accommodation of a larger women's population stemming from an agreement for the care and custody of women from MCI-Framingham, and several new recovery and reintegration programs, among a variety of other accomplishments.

Smith first came to the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department (SCSD) in 1995, after serving as a substitute teacher in the Lynn Public School System, starting with the Department as a correction officer at the House of Correction. In 1997, she added "D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Officer" to her other responsibilities and worked in the community and public school systems sharing the program's anti-drug use and prevention message. On her constant upward trajectory, Smith achieved the ranks of Corporal, Lieutenant, Captain, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent before her promotion in February of 2013 by

Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins to become the Superintendent of the Suffolk County House of Correction, where she oversaw an inmate population of nearly 1,800 and a staff of more than 500 trained correction officers.

In her time with the SCSD, Smith helped to implement Sheriff Tompkins' vision to begin transitioning the Department away from the old punitive model of corrections and into a more care-oriented format that stresses recovery with physical and mental health services and a focus on bridging the educational, emotional and employment skills-based deficits that many in the SCSD population enter with. Whether working to help establish programming geared specifically for women, the LGBTQI population or young offenders, or spearheading "safe space" conversational groups where incarcerated individuals can speak openly about their fears and concerns, Smith left an indelible imprint on the infrastructure of the Department.

"Yolanda leaves our SCSD family with an impressive list of accomplishments," said Sheriff Tompkins. "Not only did she become the first woman and first person of color to lead the House of Correction as Superintendent, but she also was the only person to serve in that role and Special Sheriff and Chief of Staff simultaneously. But, these aren't just titles, she earned each of them with her effort and dedication to the work that we do here."

"I often say that the mark of a successful leader is shown by what their people do when they leave him or her," Sheriff Tompkins

continued. "We have a sizeable hole to fill with Yolanda's departure for greener pastures, but, luckily for us, we have a deep and talented roster of people who will be stepping up, thanks in part to some of the framework that she helped to implement back when she was our Director of Training."

Speaking about her decision to depart, Smith admitted to feeling torn about leaving a distinguished career at the Department that spanned nearly thirty years, stating that she was sad to leave both the work and the people who helped her to do it every day, but the opportunity ahead was too great to ignore.

"I pursued the Tufts position because I wanted to be a part of the national conversation on police reform," said Smith. "Tufts U's president vowed to make the University an anti-racist campus and I felt I could be instrumental in helping with that mission. Leaving was a hard decision, but it is one that I think will serve me well."

"I am most looking forward to working with the students of Tufts University," Smith continued. "I feel I'm at my best when I am helping young people and when I am creating safe spaces for them to authentically express themselves. But, I am going to miss all of my colleagues, and all of the amazing work that we have done together to serve the people of Suffolk County."

On behalf of Sheriff Tompkins and the rest of the Department, we wish Yolanda great success in her new endeavors.

GRADUATES OF DEPARTMENT'S HISET PROGRAM LOOK TO CONTINUE POSITIVE TRAJECTORY



In late June, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department held a graduation ceremony for members of the HiSET Program.

At the House of Correction within the Education Division, the Adult Secondary Education/High School Equivalency Program prepares students with an 8th grade reading level or higher to earn their high school equivalency diploma or HiSET. The Education Division also helps interested participants to attain their GED (General Education Diploma), and in some cases, a Boston Public Schools High School Diploma. As part of the program, students are prepared for the five areas of the HiSET, which include: language arts, reading, science, social sciences and mathematics.

While to some, attempting to further educational pursuits while living inside of a correctional facility would seem a less-than-ideal atmosphere for learning, much less excelling, the most important factors for anyone, in almost any setting, are desire and dedication.

"I am so very happy to see that those of you who put the time and the effort in have succeeded and achieved," said Jim Dizio, Director of Education at the House of Correction. "I want to congratulate everyone on their accomplishments. None of this happens without trust and commitment and we're all hopeful that this is the first step in many positive steps forward for you."

During the ceremony, members of the Education Division

staff pledged support for the graduates as they move closer to their return to the community at-large, and fellow classmates delivered messages of inspiration and encouragement for not only successful reentry, but for continuing to learn and improve so that they could each live positive, happy lives.

"Always be kind and inspire and encourage each other," said one graduate. "Don't let your stay in South Bay define you or discourage you or take away that light that you have inside you. Don't give up on yourself. Your life matters."

"I want to thank the teachers and staff, because you didn't see us as inmates and people who made mistakes," said another participant. "You saw us as human beings who were working hard to do something positive, and that really meant a lot."

"Today is a good day," offered another graduate. "This is a big accomplishment for us all and now, we're thinking of change and the future, because we know we can do better. And, more than that, we're transforming into better people."

"I wanted to do something that makes me proud," said still another member of the class. "I've always hurt myself and hurt others, and I want to make a change. This wasn't easy, but it was worth it."

To watch the graduation ceremony in its entirety, visit: <https://fb.watch/v/1Tye2xIGe>



LATE HOC OFFICER GREGORY RECTOR HONORED WITH POSTHUMOUS MEDAL OF HONOR

Recently, the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department took part in a service held to honor the memory of one of its own.

Held at the Suffolk County House of Correction outside, in front of the Department's fallen officer memorial, Mike Simpson of Local 419 and the organization "Once Voice United" presented members of Officer Gregory Rector's family with their Medal of Honor.

Officer Rector, an 18-year veteran of the Department with the House of Correction, fell ill in early March of 2020 and was eventually hospitalized, suffering from a brain disease. Coupled with the additional complication of having to battle the secondary illness of COVID-19, Officer Rector passed away that April.

Joining Simpson at the ceremony, along with other members of the Department and Officer Rector's family and friends, Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins and former Suffolk County House of Correction Superintendent Yolanda Smith spoke about the positive impact that Officer Rector had on everyone who had the chance to know him.

"Our mandate here at the Department is for the custody and care of those remanded to our facilities," said Sheriff Tompkins. "Officer Rector was someone who understood how important this work is and he was passionate about the work. He brought humanity and compassion into his role here. We feel his love and his spirit with us in all of his family and friends who are here with us today."

"For eighteen years," recounted Superintendent Smith, "Gregory and I had this running joke where I would greet him and ask him how he was doing and he would share that infectious smile of his and say, 'I'm living the dream.' His positive attitude was also infectious. It didn't matter what was happening, whether we were in an emergency situation, or you were grieving or whatever the occasion, Gregory was always able to make people smile. He was a positive ray of sunshine and he's missed."

"Greg was such a good person," Simpson said. "This work isn't easy and it definitely has its ups and downs, but working with Greg, I always left here feeling better. He had a way of lifting your spirits and making you feel lighter, no matter what was going on. He was such a positive spirit."

Brian Dawe of One Voice United and CEO of the American Correctional Officer Intelligence Network helped to present the Medal of Honor, which is given to remember and honor corrections officers, supervisors, and other essential personnel from across the nation who have been lost due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

One Voice United is a campaign to give correctional officers and staff a voice in national conversations about corrections and the criminal justice system. To learn more about the organization, visit: www.onevoiceunited.org.



EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Michael Gallagher

Executive Assistant to the
House of Correction Superintendent

Michael Gallagher will be marking his two-year anniversary with the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department in just about four months' time.

But, while twenty months may seem like a comparatively short time in a place where many measure their service by the decade, Gallagher has accrued his fair share of experience to date working as the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent of the Suffolk County House of Correction.

Over the course of his time with the Department, Gallagher worked for a Superintendent who was, herself, undergoing a bit of change in a small space of time, with the additional responsibilities of "Special Sheriff" and "Chief of Staff" being added to an already bountiful plate. Gallagher assisted her ably across each of those roles as-needed, until last week when former Superintendent Yolanda Smith left the Department to work for Tufts University, and former Assistant Superintendent William Sweeney was promoted to become the new Superintendent of the House of Correction (HOC).

Despite the recent changes, however, Gallagher has remained steady through it all, tackling the multitude of tasks that come his way on a given day and week.

"My duties include primarily administrative work like taking notes at meetings, answering phones, keeping track of attendance and PTO, and scheduling for the Superintendent's calendar," said Gallagher. "In addition to my more routine responsibilities, I will also help out the Superintendent or other senior staff with any requests they might have, such as writing reports or compiling data, for example."

And, though his past employment experience occurred well outside of the realm of law enforcement as he worked for a property management/real estate firm, Gallagher stated that similarities between his responsibilities at his past and present jobs are greater than one would imagine.

"From my point of view, my job here is pretty similar to other jobs I've had in terms of administrative work in offices, just with the added element of security."

Speaking about the Department and its mandate for the safe care of people remanded to custody by the courts, Gallagher said, "I like the fact that we, as an organization, are providing a service to the general public and at the same time helping many people turn their lives around. Even though I don't have a ton of direct interaction with the men and women in our custody, it is nice to be a small piece of that."

As the Department moves forward with new leadership at the helm of the HOC, Gallagher talked about both his positive experiences working with the past superintendent and his anticipation for working with the present one.

"With regard to working with Yolanda, I would just say that it was really an honor and pleasure to work with her," Gallagher said. "I learned a lot from her, we got along very well, and she was clearly passionate about what she was doing and cares about helping others. She is an all-around good boss and a great person. I don't know Superintendent Sweeney super well, so I look forward to getting to know him better, and hopefully, building another great relationship."

Preparing himself for the newest leg of his journey with the Department, Gallagher cites one of the great many insights he's gained over the time that he's worked at the SCSD.

"Before I started working here, the only things I knew about corrections were from pop culture, and that was usually depictions of cruel guards and non-existent administrative staff, so it was surprising when I saw how much care and dedication all of the staff put towards helping the men and women in our custody," Gallagher recalled. "It would be good if that were more well-known so that it could help to clear up a lot of misconceptions about corrections in general."

SHERIFF TOMPKINS, MASSACHUSETTS SHERIFFS RE-AFFIRM COMMITMENT TO FAMILY CONTACTS

Will Provide Free Phone Calls to Inmates and Reduce Cost of Calls



The fourteen Massachusetts County Sheriffs recently re-affirmed their unanimous support for one of their highest collective priorities - providing strong support for communication and interaction between justice-involved individuals and their families.

Solidifying their mission to ensure that these crucially important links to family and support systems remain not only intact, but fortified, the fourteen Sheriffs of Massachusetts have agreed to provide, at a minimum, ten minutes of free phone calling per week to all incarcerated individuals. Additionally, the Sheriffs have committed to reducing the cost of subsequent phone calls by charging no more than \$.14 per minute.

Strengthening these bonds to family members, friends and outside support systems help to provide a sense of grounding to those in custody, which is beneficial to their efforts to better prepare for life after reentry.

“My fellow Sheriffs and I know that contact with friends and loved ones is an essential component for preparing justice-involved individuals for successful reentry into society,” said Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins, President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association. “This unanimous decision by the fourteen Sheriffs is reflective of our commitment to those in our care and custody. As the nature of corrections continues to evolve in the Commonwealth, we are proud to re-affirm our commitment to maintaining and strengthening familial bonds.”

By law, fees collected for phone calls must be, and are, used to benefit inmates. This includes educational programs, vocational skills training and other services designed to prepare inmates for re-entry. The Sheriffs remain committed to working with our populations to break the cycle of recidivism that has captured so many in Massachusetts.

Given the logistics of implementing this program, it will go into effect no later than August 1, 2021.



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Steven W. Tompkins, Sheriff




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