Commissioner Welcomes Five New Members to Management Team

At the June Graduation Ceremony at Brooklyn College, five administrators were named to positions where they will play a key role in the Commissioner’s reform agenda.

James Dzurenda, who has 27 years of experience at all levels in the Connecticut Department of Corrections, was appointed First Deputy Commissioner.

Timothy Farrell was appointed Deputy Commissioner for the Office of Classification and Population Management. Farrell has 28 years of experience in corrections, including serving as warden at the Bridgeport Correctional Center.

James Walsh was appointed Deputy Commissioner of Adult Programming and Community Partnerships. He will rely on his 37 years of experience in developing sophisticated classification for the adult inmates.

Gregory Kuczinski was named Assistant Commissioner of the Investigation Division. Kuczinski has extensive experience as an attorney working in private practice and as an employee of the NYPD.

Keith Taylor was named Assistant Commissioner of the Correction Intelligence Bureau. He has extensive experience in law enforcement including working with the NYPD.

Rapid Response Saves Choking Woman

In March, Officer Angela Gonzalez (RMSC) noticed that an inmate eating in the day room at RMSC was choking. Without hesitation, the officer immediately performed the Heimlich Maneuver. When her first attempt to clear the obstruction failed, the officer kept trying until the technique worked and the inmate was able to breathe again. The training she received paid off and Officer Gonzalez was able to save the inmate’s life. Officer Gonzalez was honored by Commissioner Ponte for her actions.

Largest Correction Academy Graduation in DOC History

Three-hundred-sixty-three recruits took the Oath of Office of the New York City Department of Correction on Monday, June 29, at a ceremony held at Brooklyn College. In addition, the agency honored 22 new and recently promoted civilian and uniform members of staff.

This was the third Correction Academy class to graduate under Commissioner Joseph Ponte and the largest DOC graduating class in decades. The expectation is that the graduates will play a key role in the Commissioner’s 14-point anti-violence initiative, which aims to create a culture of safety throughout the Department.

Commissioner Ponte told the graduates: “As we strive to become the safest and most respected correctional institution in the country, I could not be more proud and confident knowing these new officers share our common goal of creating an ever-evolving culture of safety at the Department of Correction.”

Beyond the Call of Duty

On Friday night, July 24, Correction Officer Michelle Crapanzano (RMSC) had just finished a double shift and was on her way home when she observed a vehicle engulfed in flames on the RFK Bridge. Without hesitation, the officer who is also a mother and grandmother, ran towards the burning vehicle. She then rescued a man who was standing next to the burning car and drove him to safety. By this selfless act, Officer Crapanzano showed tremendous courage, compassion and character.

News Flash

WHAT’S NEW: New buses, better schedules, faster ride to work, repaved roads and bus shelters.

Route bus upgrades
Picnic Celebrates South Asian Heritage

First Deputy Commissioner James Dzurenda was an honored guest at the NYPD’s Annual Desi Picnic and Award Ceremony held in July in Cunningham Park, Queens. Desi is a fraternal society made up of law enforcement professionals of South Asian descent. First Deputy Commissioner Dzurenda was joined by Captain Raja Rathour (AMKC), whose police officer son is a Desi Executive Board Member, and other Desi members from DOC.

The Indian word Desi means “From the Homeland.” The organization includes members who are either from or have ancestors from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, etc. The Desi members at DOC are in the process of forming a Department of Correction Desi Society.

Creating a Healthier Agency

This summer the C.A.R.E. Unit sponsored its 9th annual Health Fair on Rikers Island. The goal of this event was to promote healthy eating and overall fitness among all DOC staff. The organizers said they hope events like this will help to combat illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. Under the direction and leadership of Captain Edwin Brea, the C.A.R.E. Unit provides DOC staff with assistance in dealing with personal and job-related issues.

Liturgy Honors Those Buried on Hart Island

Once again, this year dozens of visitors gathered on Hart Island for the annual Ascension Thursday Hart Island Mass for All Whose Remains Are Buried There. The annual interdenominational event, which has been taking place for more than 25 years, was organized by the St. Mary Star of the Sea parish on City Island.

Attendees included active members of the City Island Historical Museum Society, and visitors from other cities and states. The liturgy was held at the foot of the Potter’s Field big marble cross which itself dates back on the island more than 100 years.

CO Wife Saves Life of CO Husband With Kidney Transplant

Environmental Health Unit, Correction Officer Preston Scott was diagnosed with Polycystic Kidney disease in 1998, a genetic disease his grandfather and mother unfortunately succumbed to. Fortunately, he met Correction Officer Latisha Womack-Scott of the Health Affairs Unit one year prior to his diagnosis, only to discover 18 years later that she not only was the love of his life, but the cure for his disease.

"We have always felt that we had a connection outside of our marriage," says CO Womack-Scott. "We have a lot in common and similar dreams of accomplishments that we hoped for later in life. When Preston was diagnosed with this disease, we both decided to live life to the fullest, never losing hope. So I hoped for a miracle, got tested as a kidney donor for Preston and was told on Christmas Eve to choose a date for the surgery."

On February 19, 2015, NY Presbyterian Hospital staff performed a kidney transplant where donor Officer Womack-Scott was able to offer that "gift of life" to the recipient, her husband, retired officer Preston Scott. Preston Scott is now able to enjoy life after 26 years of service with DOC thanks to his wonderful wife.

"That was the greatest Christmas gift, not only for Preston, but for my children and myself," says CO Womack-Scott. "No gift could ever beat the gift of life. And that’s when I knew that our marriage was God sent."

Officer Womack-Scott hopes to establish a program for officers who are willing to donate an organ to help their fellow officers.

Always Helping Those in Need

GMDC Correction Officer Michael McKinney is truly making a difference by helping and giving to those who don’t have. A few times during the week, after his shift, CO McKinney travels to a Bedford-Stuyvesant homeless shelter. The shelter is run by the Bushwick Economic Development Corporation, which is part of the New York City Department of Homeless Services and is located on Pulaski Street. Many times CO McKinney, a proud Brooklyn resident, brings some of his fellow CO’s to help out the families with food and clothing.

“I feel that these families are part of me since they are from Brooklyn,” says CO McKinney. "The folks who run this shelter have such big hearts and they make me feel I’m part of their team every time I arrive at the shelter.”

News Flash

Training and Professional Development

WHAT’S NEW: A two-week training program for Personnel Supervisors is now under way.

A ten-week Management 101 training course has been implemented.