



Our Mission

The Department of Correction shall strive to be a global leader in progressive correctional practices and partnered re-entry initiatives to support responsive evidence-based practices aligned to law-abiding and accountable behaviors. Safety and security shall be a priority component of this responsibility as it pertains to staff, victims, citizens, and offenders.

From the Commissioner



With the start of the New Year many people make resolutions and set goals for what they would like to accomplish in the coming months. It is also a great opportunity to take a look back on the challenges, as well as our accomplishments, of the past year. When I think back on last year, I cannot help but feel proud to be associated with such an outstanding group of correctional professionals. It is truly a privilege to lead such a group of dedicated staff, who continually strive for excellence. As we continue to deal with what is commonly referred to as the “new normal,” our facilities remain safe, secure, and orderly. This is all thanks to your efforts.

Looking back, one thing that jumps out at me is the incredible generosity of our staff. Whether, it is for the less fortunate during the holidays, pay-to-parks for co-workers who have been struck by tragedy, or your unwavering support of Special Olympics – your desire to help those in need is nothing short of inspiring. As for what is on the horizon for this year, as you no doubt are aware, the difficult yet appropriate decision has been made to close the Willard building. It is anticipated that the Willard building will be closed on or before April 1, 2023. I want to take this opportunity to reassure all those impacted by this closure that layoffs are not a consideration.

We are working closely with our union leaders, and human resource partners to make this as smooth a transition as possible as we work through unavoidable reassignments. Our focus will be on filling existing vacancies at facilities within close proximity to Willard facility in order to minimize the impact on staff members and their families. As always, safety and security will remain the top priority as we navigate through this complex process.

One thing I am certain of as we move forward with this endeavor, is the support and dedication of the Agency’s staff to ensure the process is carried out professionally, seamlessly, and safely.

Finally, whether or not you made New Year’s resolutions, I urge everyone to make it a priority to take care of themselves.

I am excited to work together with all of you to achieve new goals, and overcome the inevitable challenges of the coming year.

Thank you again for your support.

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through

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and the nation

by the

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Multiple Honors for the K9 Unit

Two Department of Correction K9 Unit teams were highlighted as part of the Connecticut State Police's 231st K9 Patrol Training Class held on December 22, 2022 at the State Police K9 Training Academy in Meriden. One of the two teams, K9 Officer Johnny Peralta and K9 Ollie graduated as members of the class after successful completion of 14 weeks of rigorous training. K9 Ollie is now certified in obedience, tactical obedience, obstacles, building and area searches, aggression, tracking and evidence recovery.



K9 Officers Sean Kelly (L) and Johnny Peralta with K9 Ollie.

The graduation was particularly moving for Officer Peralta, a 10-year veteran of the Department of Correction, who tragically lost his first K9 Partner, K9 Jak, suddenly on September 21, 2020 due to medical complications. Upon returning home in September 2022 from a military deployment to Africa, K9 Officer Peralta returned to the K9 Unit and was paired with K9 Ollie, a two-year-old Dutch Shepherd from Slovakia. The pair immediately established a special connection, and their bond continued to grow as they worked together through the peaks and valleys of the K9 Academy.

An additional honor was bestowed on the staff of the DoC's K9 Unit during the graduation ceremony. The Connecticut State Police K9 Unit recognized K9 Officer Sean Kelly and K9 Knauss as The DoC's K9 Team of the Year. K9 Knauss became a member of the DoC in August of 2021, and was named after fallen Army Staff Sergeant Ryan C. Knauss. Sergeant Knauss tragically lost his life as a result of wounds sustained during an attack on the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan on

August 26, 2021, while he was supporting noncombatant evacuation operations.

Officer Kelly and K9 Knauss graduated back in December of 2021, as members of the Connecticut State Police's 223rd Patrol Class. K9 Officer Kelly, a five-year veteran of the Department of Correction, and K9 Knauss, a three-year-old German Shepherd from the Czech Republic have been extremely valuable members of the K9 Unit since joining the Department's K9 team. they have responded to, and assisted facility staff on several occasions to help maintain the safety and security within the agency's facilities.

Please join Director Ron Cotta, Captain Josh Trifone, and the entire Executive Team in congratulating these well-deserving K9 Officers and their K9 partners.



K9 Jak



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2nd Annual York CI Gold Tournament Benefits Special Olympics CT - A Big Hit

The Second Annual York Correctional Institution Golf Tournament to benefit Special Olympics Connecticut held at Shennecossett Golf Course in Groton on July 15, 2022, had 104 participants from throughout the state - all enjoying a day of golf with raffles, good food, and friends.

As a result, the event organizers from York CI were excited to present a check in the amount of \$11,000 to Jackie Turro, Senior Director and Torch Run Liaison with Special Olympics CT. The staff at York CI continues to strive – through additional fundraising efforts – towards a goal of \$20,000 they annually set for themselves. Plans are already underway for the third annual golf tournament later this year.

Warden Trina Sexton and all those who worked on the event would like to extend their appreciation to all the businesses that



L to R : : Administrative Assistant Neena Lucarelli, Correction Officer Craig Olsen, Torch Run Liaison Jackie Turro, Correction Officer John Robert (with picture of Correctional Counselor Meghan Niedzwicki), Warden Trina Sexton, Correction Officer Eric Arbour, Correction Officer Oscar Cartagena, Deputy Warden Katie Iozzia, Captain Mike Moran, and Counselor Supervisor Charlene Baskerville.

sponsored the event. The event would not have been possible without their support. A special thank you goes out to: Mike Moran Team; Mark at Colonial Life; Jen at Bearingstar: BMW; KIA; AFSCME Local 1565; Bouvier Insurance; the Canon guys at Trigger Finger; and so many more.

This Tournament and check is a small part of the multitude of activities the staff of the York facility supports throughout the year to raise money for Special Olympics CT.

In addition to those pictured above, the organizers of the golf tournament would also like to thank the following for their instrumental efforts to make the event a success:

Deputy Warden Michael Beaton; Counselor Supervisor Lauren Coletti; Lieutenant Matt Fulton; Correction Officer Don Kelly; Parole Officer Colleen McClay; Lieutenant Casey Ramos; Counselor Supervisor Anne Trimachi; and Parole Officer Karolina Urbanowicz.

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities. The goal is to give them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. There are as many as 200 million people with intellectual disabilities around the world. The goal of Special Olympics is to reach out to every one of them—and their families as well.

K9 Calendar for a Cause

Connecticut Department of Correction K9 Officer Greg Harpin and his K9 partner, Drago, are featured on the month of January 2023 Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. nationwide fundraising calendar. Each year, 12 Law Enforcement K9s who are recipients of vests provided by the nonprofit organization are highlighted in the publication.

In addition, K9 Training Lieutenant Ilidio Rodrigues and his partner K9



K9 Officer Greg Harpin with K9 Drago

Rikki Bobby are featured on the memorial page, which pays tribute to the four-legged heroes who have passed. K9 Rikki Bobby served 12 years with the department's K9 Unit before retiring in 2017. Sadly, he passed in May of 2021. Calendars are available for purchase online



Lt. Ilidio Rodrigues and K9 Rikki Bobby

for \$18 via the Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. website at www.vik9s.org. For additional information or mail orders, you may call: 508-824-6978.

All proceeds from the 2023 calendars will be used to provide equipment and services for law enforcement K9s nationwide.

Vested Interest in K9s, Inc. is a 501c(3) non-profit whose mission is to provide bullet and stab-protective vests and other assistance to dogs of law enforcement and related agencies throughout the country. Through

fundraising efforts, grants, and donations, the organization has donated more than 4,900 bullet and stab protective vests to law enforcement K9s in all 50 states, at a value of over 6.9 million dollars.

Around the Cell Block

TENNESSEE - Every person entering a Tennessee DoC prison will be required to be screened by a full-body scanner. The technology enhances the Agency's current security procedures by using advanced imaging technology allowing staff to identify contraband smuggled inside a person's body.

OHIO - The Hamilton County Justice Center's prisoner intake section closed overnight with limits on which prisoners are admitted overnight. This comes amid a staffing shortage of correction officers at the county jail. An all-county broadcast went out to all law enforcement in Hamilton County around 8:30 p.m., stating that only violent offenders would be accepted between 11 p.m. Sunday and 7 a.m. Monday.

ALABAMA- In a recently published report, Alabama's DoC reported a decrease of 18.7% in staffing between September 30, 2021 and September 30, 2022.

<p>Total CT DOC Supervised Population on January 31, 2023 13,088 On January 31, 2022 the population was 12,938</p>

Bridgeport CC Gives Back to the Community

Warden Jeanette Maldonado, and Deputy Wardens Charlatta Jones and Jamel Linen would like to recognize the staff of Bridgeport Correctional Center (BCC) for putting volunteerism into practice. Warden Maldonado felt that this community service event was a great success. “Our initial goal was to provide 20 families with a complete Thanksgiving dinner and we exceeded that goal due to the tremendous generosity of the staff at BCC,” Warden Maldonado said.



Bridgeport CC Warden Jeanette Maldonado (green coat) and staff with their cornucopia of donations.

With the knowledge that many families in the Bridgeport area are struggling to keep up with day-to-day financial demands, BCC staff members did a phenomenal job bringing all sorts of Thanksgiving food related items from canned goods to turkeys.

The Bridgeport facility staff members not just met their challenge; they exceeded it by an incredible 805%. Due to the numerous donations, BCC was able to provide more than 161 baskets of food and turkeys to the following community locations: Kings Pantry and Church, Community Actions; The Center of Family Justice; Read Elementary School; Achievement First Bridgeport Academy Elementary School; and Jay Brothers Recovery Network of Programs.

Staff members witnessed the gratefulness and heard the many thank-yous as they, alongside families and community organizations loaded Thanksgiving baskets into cars, vans, and trucks.

The turkey drive was just the start of the Bridgeport facility’s efforts. On December 1, 2022 from 10:00 am -2:00 p.m., staff members collaborated in a clothing drive with Career Resources Inc., to support at-risk individuals. The clothing drive took place in the Bridgeport facility’s visitor parking lot. Among the items collected were: new t-shirts; underwear; socks; and bras; new and gently used coats, hats and gloves; and gift cards. Approximately 50 coats; 25 pairs of gloves; and 20 hats were collected during the drive.

To wrap up the holiday season, BCC staff members participated in a toy drive for children under the care of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) in the greater Bridgeport area. Thanks to their efforts, BCC staff created moments of joy by providing toys, books, games, clothing, scooters and other gifts for more than 25 children.

“We are humbled by the generosity of the BCC Community. There is such beauty in the spirit of giving, and we are grateful you chose DCF and our special children to be the recipient of your kindness,” said DCF social Work supervisor Kelly Smith.

The staff members of the Bridgeport Correctional Center who participated in these community-building service events exemplify the words of Coretta Scott King-- “The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members.”

DoC Season of Giving Wrap-Up

In what is an annual tradition, various facilities and units throughout the Department of Correction show their generosity by collecting gifts for those who may otherwise go without during the holiday season.

From the Department of Children and Families Wishing Trees, to Toys for Tots, to the Connecticut Children's Medical Center below is a sampling of some of the efforts of the Agency's staff members to help make the holidays better for deserving children.



Carl Robinson's staff members filled 49 DCF Christmas Wish Slips.



The Board of Pardons and Paroles staff collected donations for the Marines' Toys for Tots campaign.



Parole and Community Services staff collected toys for the Connecticut Children's Medical Center.



The Macdougall-Walker staff fulfilled the Christmas wishes of 60 children under DCF care.



Brooklyn CI staff filled 47 DCF Christmas Wish Slips.

First Time Author

After writing for herself, her family and friends, Mirna Grant, a Licensed Practical Nurse working in the Medical Isolation Unit at the MacDougall-Walker facility has taken her passion for writing to the next level. She is now officially a published author of a children’s book titled, “Adventures of Little Olga.”

The book tells the story of a little girl and her dog and their adventures. Little Olga takes the reader on a journey to all the places she dreams of visiting. She also enjoys singing, dancing, and telling her story of the places in her hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts.



Licensed Practical Nurse and Children’s Book Author, Mirna Grant.



Ms. Grant was inspired to write the book in memory of her late mother Olga Hernandez who loved to read, and is the basis for the character “little Olga.”

The book, which Ms. Grant worked on for two years, was self-published through the company she created in April of 2022, called OH Bella Arts Publishing Company. She is understandably proud of her first book and is currently working on a romance novel, as well as a book of poetry. She is also working with other writers to help them achieve their goal of getting their works published.

Ms. Grant is also a member of the Art Institute for Writers, and the International Society of Female Professionals.

Special Olympics Connecticut 2023 Penguin Plunge Schedule

Register now:
<http://www.soct.org/plunge>

Middletown

February

25

Polish Falcons Nest #519
144 Prout Hill Road, Middletown CT
Registration @ 10:00am | Plunge @ 12:00pm

Shoreline

March

5

Eastern Point Beach
1 Beach Pond Road, Groton CT
Registration @ 10:00am | Plunge @ 12:00pm

Brookfield

March

18

Brookfield Town Beach
460 Candlewood Road, Brookfield CT
Registration @ 11:30am | Plunge @ 1:00pm

Tolland

March

25

Crandall Park
120 Cider Mill Road, Tolland CT
Registration @ 11:00am | Plunge @ 12:00pm

Monroe

April

1

Great Hollow Lake (Wolfe Park)
454 Doc Silverstone Drive, Monroe CT
Registration @ 10:00am | Plunge @ 12:00pm

Fairfield

April

8

Jennings Beach
880 S. Benson Road, Fairfield CT
Registration @ 10:00am | Plunge @ 12:00pm

988: A Direct Link for Suicide Prevention and Crisis Support

As of July 16, 2022, a new three-digit dialing code, 988, will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).

When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.

The previous Lifeline phone number (1-800-273-8255) will always remain available to people in emotional distress or suicidal crisis.

People will still receive the same services whether dialing 9-8-8 or 1-800-273-8255.

The Lifeline's network of over 200 crisis centers has been in operation since 2005, and has been proven to be effective. It's the counselors at these local crisis centers who respond to the calls the Lifeline receives every day. Numerous studies have shown that callers feel less suicidal, less depressed, less overwhelmed and more hopeful after speaking with a Lifeline counselor.

Anyone located in the United States can call or text 9-8-8 any time of day, seven days a week to receive support for suicidal, mental health, and substance use crisis.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), callers will be routed to a local crisis center based on their area code. A local, trained counselor will listen, provide support and share resources, if needed. If there is no one available at a local crisis center, the caller will be re-routed to a national center for assistance. If needed, the counselor on the call can activate a local mobile mental health crisis team to be dispatched to the caller to provide therapeutic interventions and make referrals for outpatient services or transportation for further evaluation, according to SAMHSA.

In the U.S., 45,979 people died by suicide in 2020. That is an average of one person every 11 minutes, according to the Centers for Disease Control. Additionally, 12.2 million adults thought about suicide, 3.2 million adults planned to die by suicide, and 1.2 million adults attempted suicide. In a report to Congress in August 2019, Federal Communications Commission staff first proposed 988 as the nationwide, easy-to-remember, 3-digit dialing code for individuals in crisis to connect to suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

On July 16, 2020, the FCC adopted rules to establish 988 as the nationwide, easy-to-remember 3-digit dialing code for people in crisis to connect with suicide prevention and mental health crisis counselors. On October 17, 2020, the National Suicide Hotline Designation Act of 2020 was signed into law, incorporating 988 into statute as the new Lifeline and Veterans Crisis Line phone number. Recognizing the need to better support at-risk communities in crisis, including youth and individuals with disabilities, the FCC adopted additional rules in November 2021 to expand access to this critical service by establishing the ability to also text 988. As a result, covered phone service and text providers in the United States and the five major U.S. territories—American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands—were required to direct all 988 calls and texts to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline by July 16, 2022.

