

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.

Season's Greetings

As this year draws to a close, I would like to extend my best wishes for the holiday season. As I reflect on the successes and challenges of not just this past year, but the past 36 years as well, I am filled with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and pride to have been associated with such an outstanding group of correctional professionals. It has truly been a privilege to work side-by-side with such dedicated men and women.

Because there are no holidays as far as our mission of protecting the public is concerned, I am especially grateful to all the staff members who will be working in our facilities on and around Christmas day. Your dedication will allow your peers to enjoy time with their loved ones.

On that note, I want to express my deep appreciation for the unwavering support and sacrifices from your families not only throughout the year, but especially during this time of year. Without their support, our jobs would, without doubt, be much more difficult - please thank them for me.

As we look forward to the New Year, I ask and pray that above all else, you stay safe. Your well-being is paramount. Always be mindful of the inherent risks in our environment.

Please continue to support each other. The bonds formed inside our facilities are strong. Never forget you are part of a greater correctional family that takes care of each other.

I also ask you to be proud of the work you do. Your's is difficult yet vital work, that truly makes a difference in the lives of others and keeps our communities safe.

However you observe this holiday season, I hope you find time to relax with family and friends, not forgetting to reflect on the many blessings in your lives. On behalf of myself and the entire Executive Team, please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your service to this agency, and our sincere wish for a peaceful, healthy and above all safe new year.

With deep respect,

Angel Quiros
Commissioner

August 13, 2025
through
December 22, 2025

Distributed quarterly
to 5,500 staff
and via the Internet
throughout Connecticut
and the nation
by the
Department of Correction
24 Wolcott Hill Road
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Ned Lamont
Governor

Angel Quiros
Commissioner

Web address:
www.ct.gov/doc

Public Information
Office telephone:
(860) 692-7780
Fax: (860) 692-7783

Honoring Our Veterans

Veterans Support & Recognition at MacDougall-Walker

The MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution proudly launched its first ever Veterans Support & Recognition Initiative on Monday, November 10, 2025. The event was a heartfelt effort dedicated to honoring and uplifting the veterans who serve within our facility.

The initiative created a meaningful and uplifting atmosphere, one filled with connection, gratitude, and support. Staff members came together to recognize the brave individuals who have served our nation and who continue to serve our state and our community every day, within the Department of Correction.

This year's debut was strengthened through powerful partnerships with several outstanding community and

state supporters, including: Michele Roberts, Federal Veterans Liaison; Jessica Casella, LCSW, Suicide Prevention Coordinator; and Devon Julien Sr., Veterans Service Officer, Connecticut Veterans Affairs. The event also benefited from the dedicated efforts and support of colleagues from within the department, including: The CT Department of Correction K9 Team- Officer Carlson and K9 Remy; The Employee Assistance Unit; and The Military Peer Support Program Unit. These partners brought invaluable support, resources, and presence, helping us highlight the importance of wellness, connection, and accessible services for veteran staff.



MacDougall-Walker Veterans Honored L-R: Dentist, Eugen Wichmann; Correction Officers James Gadson, Stephen DeJoinville, Cristial Olivo, Isidro Olmeda, and Joshua Briggs

The Veterans Support & Recognition Initiative served as a reminder that appreciation does not always require a stage; sometimes the most impactful moments are the ones where people feel seen, valued, and supported. The staff of the MacDougall-Walker facility remains committed to continuing this tradition and strengthening the culture of respect, gratitude, and unity for all who have served.

Manson Youth's Veterans Honored

The staff of The Manson Youth Institution also proudly hosted a Veterans Day Ceremony honoring the service and sacrifice of our agency's veterans. The event was coordinated by Correctional Counselor Jilena Cichon and featured a moving presentation by the agency's Honor Guard, and United States Marine Corps veteran, Correctional Captain Jose Matias who sang a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem.

Special thanks also to Correction Officer Bruno Pacheco for his dedication and to the members of the Department's Honor Guard for their contributions in making this event a truly special and memorable occasion.



MYI Veterans L-R: Dr. Colette Poole, Correction Officer Tori Smith, Correction Officer Bruno Pacheco, Captain Jose Matias, & Correction Officer Scott Kelly.

Routine Screening Results in Advanced Cancer Diagnosis

Chris Gergovich, a Clinical Social Worker assigned to the Garner Correctional Institution, never imagined a routine screening colonoscopy would uncover cancer, especially when he felt healthy and had no symptoms. At 6' 5", strong and active, he had no reason to suspect anything was wrong, certainly not advanced colorectal cancer.



Clinical Social Worker Chris Gergovich undergoing chemotherapy therapy treatment for colon cancer.

On November 2, 2024, a screening colonoscopy revealed three polyps in Chris's colon. One appeared malignant. As devastating as the news was, in a way there was a bit of luck involved, if his principal physician had not informed him that the recommended age for colonoscopy screening had been lowered to age 45, down from 50, he may have waited another three years before having one.

"Who knows where I would be if I had waited," Gergovich said.

With the diagnosis of Stage 3 colon cancer, Chris knew he had to act fast, on December 2, 2024, he had successful robotic-assisted colorectal

surgery at Danbury Hospital to remove seven inches of his colon and 21 lymph nodes.

Following the surgery, Chris needed to follow a low-residue, low-fiber diet, an adjustment made easier with the help of a registered dietitian and oncology nutritionist at Danbury Hospital's Praxair Cancer Center.

Unfortunately, because of the cancer's advanced stage, Chris would have to endure six months chemotherapy beginning just three weeks after surgery.

"Having chemo was challenging and daunting, but I knew it served a purpose," Chris said. "I would take six months of difficult chemo to gain 60 years of life. I plan to be a 108-year-old cancer survivor."

The first round of chemotherapy went smoothly, consisting of a three-hour long inpatient treatment, followed by 46 hours attached to a take home pump. The cumulative effects eventually wore Chris down. As is typical with the treatments, he had no appetite, was nauseous, and felt drained. He found frontloading calories before infusions helped improve his energy level. Dedicated to working out and always on the go, he reluctantly realized that he had to slow down and listen to his body.

"I realized I could not be in control of the cancer, and I needed to let my doctors take the lead," Chris said.

"The release of control was tough; the whole experience was eye-opening."

He also received a lot of help from his family.

"My wife, Amy, took care of everything. She managed all my appointments, and there were so many, from all the bloodwork and scans to nephrology, oncology, urology and more. She made sure I had all my medications," he said. "Amy took it on like it was her cancer, too. I would not be where I am without her."

His mother, a former critical care nurse, also helped after surgery. And people he didn't expect showed up with care packages and words of encouragement.

CERT Basic 25-01 Graduates

For the first time in more than three years the Department of Correction’s Correctional Emergency Response Team (CERT) conducted a Basic training class, resulting in a total of 33 individuals completing the grueling two-week training curriculum. The members of CERT Class 25-01 were officially recognized as graduates as part of the Pre-Service Class 308 ceremonies held at the Maloney Center for Training and Staff Development on November 13, 2025.

The CERT Basic graduates were comprised of men and women from various job classifications including:



CERT Basic Outstanding Instructor
Captain Silvio Maieli

counselors, general maintenance, electrical, and a physician’s assistant. The tryouts started on September 29 and ran through October 17.

Three of the CERT basic graduates were selected as recipients of individual awards presented during the ceremony. Physician’s assistant Hannah Sullivan received the Brad Emmellmann award which is awarded to the person who exhibits a never give up attitude and shows a tremendous amount of heart. Correctional Substance Abuse Counselor Yavuz Usluca received the Michael Bongiovanni award, which is selected by team members as the individual who displayed leadership

qualities and led the team when the instructors were not present. Both of these awards are named after members of the unit who tragically lost their lives unexpectedly.

The final award was the outstanding instructor award given to Captain Silvio Maieli who inspired and motivated the candidates to their maximum potential on a daily basis. This was the last time Captain Silvio will serve as a CERT Basic instructor, as he approaches his 20 years of state service.

The leaders of the CERT Unit wish to thank the entire crew instructors of Class 25-01 for the outstanding job they did. Also, they are very appreciative of the training academy leadership for including them in the formal graduation ceremony of Pre-Service Class 308.

Around the Cell Block

MICHIGAN - The Michigan Department of Corrections has established a new policy to provide all confidential and legal mail sent to incarcerated individuals as photocopies in an attempt to stop drug smuggling.

DELAWARE - The Delaware Department of Corrections announced the first four inmates have graduated from the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center from the Tattoo Artist Career Pathway Program. Department officials describe the program as an innovative vocational training program designed to develop a marketable skill, and get practical hands-on experience.

SOUTH CAROLINA – In a case of surf and turf contraband, a drone recently dropped a package of steak, crab legs, marijuana, cigarettes, and even a tin of Old Bay seasoning into the yard of the Lee Correctional Institution. A correction officer intercepted the package before it reached its intended recipient.

**EAU toll-free phone number:
844 - 997- 4EAU (4328)**

**Total CT DOC
Supervised
Population
on
December 22, 2025
13,817
On December 22, 2024
the population was
13,854**

Learning Journey

York's Michelle Ramos Participates in Parents as Teachers 2025 Conference

Counselor Supervisor Michelle Ramos recently represented the Connecticut Department of Correction at the annual National Parents as Teachers (PAT) 2025 International Conference conducted on October 13 – 16, at the Puerto Rico Convention Center in San Juan. The conference coincided with the organization's 41st anniversary of providing critical early childhood education and support via connecting parents and caregivers with trained professionals who make regular personal home visits during a child's pre-natal through kindergarten years. The conference featured more than 100 workshops, reputable keynote speakers, discussions groups, and fun-filled networking opportunities.



Doula Ashley Minihan (L) and Counselor Supervisor Michelle Ramos at the National Parents as Teachers Conference.

Overseeing the Pregnancy Tier at York Correctional Institution, CS Ramos works closely with Ashley Minihan, owner and lead doula of Empowered Beginnings. A doula is a person trained to provide advice, information, emotional support, and physical comfort to a mother before, during, and after childbirth. In collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), Ms. Minihan facilitates prenatal and postnatal education, as well as group sessions focused on parenting and emotional development, including the Circle of Security program. Together, their efforts provide compassionate guidance and support to pregnant residents at the York facility - from pregnancy through childbirth, into the early stages of parenting.

This year's PAT theme Reach New Heights, was all about encouraging growth and development. In addition to attending the conference, CS Ramos and Ms. Minihan also gave a presentation titled, "Keeping the Connection While Separated" – which focused on the diligent

efforts provided to and for incarcerated parents at York. Their presentation also explored how both group and individual visits were implemented to support parents experiencing short or long-term separation due to incarceration, custody issues, child protective services involvement, or participation in treatment programs. Through interactive discussion, participants examined strategies to ease the guilt and shame that parents often feel and learned approaches to cultivate strength-based and positive dialog to encourage growth and connection. Warden Sexton would like to take this opportunity to extend both admiration and gratitude to CS Ramos and Ms. Minihan for their commitment. The Warden believes that this initiative is fundamental for all affected females at York, their children, and ultimately the larger community as well.

DOC Wins 2025 GreenerGov Award

Congratulations to the agency's Engineering and Facilities Management Unit on winning a 2025 GreenerGov Award for energy efficiency.

The Department of Correction received the award for a project with the greatest percent annual natural gas savings completed in fiscal year 24. The project, a Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) upgrade which included an energy management system for the Osborn Correctional Institution. The upgrade is expected to save about 1.4% of the annual natural gas usage for the facility.

The award was presented at a ceremony hosted by the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), and the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), held at the State Capitol in July.

A Doggone Good Day

CT DOC K-9 Take Two Out of Three Top Prizes

The Department of Correction K9 Unit proudly hosted the 33rd Annual Connecticut K9 Olympics on Saturday, September 20, 2025 at Officer's Beach on the grounds of Carl Robinson Correctional Institution. This marks the eighth year the DOC has hosted this incredible event, which draws thousands of spectators from across New England, with teams traveling from as far as Danville, New Hampshire to compete this year.

DOC K9 teams performed exceptionally well this year. With a total of 31 teams competing, Correction Officer Jared Surprenant and his K9 partner, Grim took second place overall. While Correction Officer Sean Kelly and his K9 partner, Knauss won third place overall. First place overall went to Sergeant Jon Mach and his K9 partner, Duke from the Hampden County Sheriff's Department. Other DOC standouts include CO Brian Cyr and his K9 partner Hawk, who won first place in the Obstacles competition, and officer Tim Rivera-Melendez and his K9 partner Cassius, who won the top prize in the Obedience competition.

Captain Ilidio Rodrigues and Correction Officer Kristen Brousseau oversaw event operations, ensuring a day filled with community spirit and family fun, while also recognizing the commitment and dedication of the K9 handlers who chose to compete. Their efforts were supported by DOC K9 Unit officers, who not only assisted with setup, but also added new touches to this year's event, including

a Wall of Fame honoring all past champions since the competition began in 1992.

Planning for an event of this scale takes months, and it would not be possible without the support of District 1 Maintenance staff members, who set up the competition field while ensuring the obstacles were safe and secure for the K9 teams to navigate.



Correction Officer Jared Surprenant and his K9 partner, Grim



Correction Officer Brian Cyr and K9 Hawk

Additionally, Correctional Food Service Manager Sara Osle, Correctional Food Service Supervisor (CFSS) 2 Alexander Cardoso, CFSS 3 Joshua Giroux, and CFSS 2 Cesar Culling spent most of the day preparing hundreds of hot dogs, hamburgers and sausages that volunteers from UCONN helped to sell. Proceeds from the T-shirts and food sales were donated to various charities benefiting retired K9s, as well as organizations such as The Hometown Foundation and Shriners Children's Hospital.

Thank you, also, to the agency's Honor Guard for presenting the colors, CERT members for assisting with parking and demonstrations, and Administrative Assistant Michele Jones, who sang a beautiful rendition of the National Anthem.

As it has in previous years, the Department of Correction K9 Unit showcased its excellence, strengthening community ties, while highlighting the skill, dedication, and heart behind every K9 team.

Winning the Battle Against Cancer

from page 3

Routine Screening for Colorectal Cancer is Key

“The dread I felt when I was first diagnosed has been replaced by how many people really care. It brought me together with so many people and opened my eyes to the support I have,” Chris said.

He also credits his three dogs: “They were my therapy dogs and part of my recovery team.”

The staff at Praxair Cancer Center also assisted in connecting Chris with local and national support organizations such as the Joe Andruzzi Foundation. Established in 2008, by former New England Patriot, three-time Super Bowl champion, Joe Andruzzi and his wife, following his own battle with cancer.

The organization is committed to tackling cancer’s impact by providing financial assistance for patients and their families as well as funding pediatric brain cancer research.

“Joe was warm and welcoming, we had an instant connection,” said Gergovich. The connection was so strong that Gergovich is now a National Ambassador for the Andruzzi Foundation.

Chris also deeply appreciated help from organizations like Ann’s Place and the Connecticut Cancer Foundation.

“I received gas and grocery gift cards, and support with my house payments,” he said. “I could conserve my energy and focus on getting better.”

Thanks in part to the support he received; Chris was able to return to work at the Garner facility on January 13, and his last chemotherapy treatment was on June 20, 2025. He is now close to his baseline health, but some days he still feels wiped out even though it does not show.

“Everyone says I look healthy and not wiped out. It lets me know I am doing the right things and gives me tremendous confidence.” He looks forward to traveling again and getting back into a regular fitness routine. His experience has also deepened his empathy at work.

Chris is grateful for the quick action and work of his medical team, and for the love and support of those around him.

“I can’t sing the praises of Danbury Hospital, my wife, Amy, my family and support system enough,” he added. “All of these things are why I am beating cancer.”

Aside from staying healthy, Chirs has a new mission in life – to inspire and encourage everyone to get screened for colon cancer.

“Early detection is key,” Gergovich said. “I felt fine before getting tested, I hate to think what might have happened if I had waited.”

Gergovich recently received an early holiday present of sorts in the form of test results from a colonoscopy on December 5. Nearly a year after his surgery, he received the, “all clear” from his doctor.

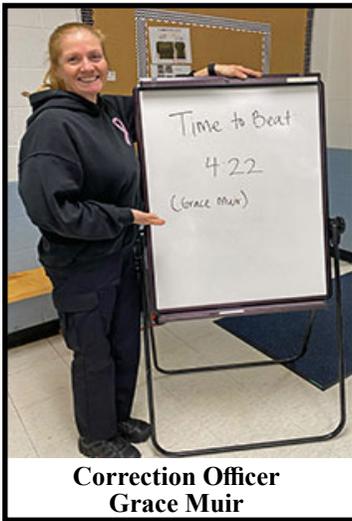


(L-R): Chris Gergovich, Amy Gergovich and former New England Patriot Joe Andruzzi.

45 IS THE NEW 50

(The new recommended age for your first colorectal cancer screening)

Rolling Up Their Sleeves for a Good Cause



**Correction Officer
Grace Muir**

The staff of the Cheshire Correctional Institution partnered with the American Red Cross to host a blood drive, held within the Webster facility staff gym on October 8, 2025.

Staff members donated a total of 28 units of whole blood, which will help save between 28, to as many as 84 people's lives - depending on how the blood is used.

The donors mixed in a friendly competition to see who could complete their blood donation fastest. The champion was Correction Officer Grace Muir with an

impressive donation time of 4 minutes and 22 seconds. Thank you to

all the donors for volunteering to help fulfill the American Red Cross's critical mission to help save lives.



**Recent Donors - Officers Luis
Torres (L) and Adam Szczerbicki**

Running for a Reason

Members of the Department of Correction's Employee Assistance Unit (EAU) participated in the **2025 Believe 208: Run for the Brave & Finest** on September 29, 2025, in East Hartford, CT.

The Believe 208 5K Run for the Brave and Finest, in Memory of East Hartford Police Officer Paul Buchanan, supports "Believe 208," an initiative in collaboration with the Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement (CABLE). Believe 208 works with CABLE to provide resources, training and information on all aspects of first responder well-being. The Believe 208 mission is to increase awareness of the unique challenges facing first responders and to be a trusted, influential source for first responders, their families, agencies and community stakeholders.

Proceeds from the race will help to fund education and training efforts, and provide resources to first responders and families in need.

"We were very proud to participate in this incredible event in honor and memory of all first responders – especially our own Department of Correction staff members - who have tragically died by suicide," said EAU Director Dianne Moynihan. "It's hard to imagine a more worthy cause than supporting the mental health -particularly suicide awareness for correctional, first responder, and military staff."



**Members of the DOC's Employee Assistance Unit (and supporters)
at the Believe 208 5K Run for the Brave and Finest.**



SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY 2026

Apply for a \$1,000 Scholarship

Each year, the Middle Atlantic States Correctional Association (MASCA) awards academic scholarships to individuals pursuing a degree beyond secondary education in majors which can lead to a career in the broad fields of corrections and criminal justice. MASCA presents annual scholarships in honor of those members who dedicated their lives to the improvement of the justice system and consistently advocated the need for the exchange of ideas for growth and change among member's states. Scholarships are available to all current members or the children or select other relatives of members. See the MASCA website for complete details.

Join Now!

*Regular membership is only \$20 per year
Student membership is \$10 per year*

[https://www.masca.us/
membership.php](https://www.masca.us/membership.php)

Apply Here

Link to Scholarship Application

[https://www.masca.us/
scholarships.php](https://www.masca.us/scholarships.php)

Deadline to apply March 31, 2026