

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.

Surprise Swearing In

After swearing in nine of the agency's newest administrators, Commissioner Rollin Cook was treated to a surprise - he himself was ceremoniously sworn in by Deputy Commissioner Angel Quiros.

With their loved ones looking on, and their right hands raised, Commissioner Cook first swore in the Director of Programs and Treatment, William Murphy. He then proceeded to introduce and share the accomplishments of all eight Deputy Wardens who were to be sworn in shortly afterwards as one group.

see [Surprise Swearing In /page 5](#)



Commissioner Cook being sworn in by Deputy Commissioner Quiros.

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

From the Commissioner



I want to take this opportunity to address the importance of resiliency. If you are going to succeed in life, much less corrections, you need to be resilient.

A simple way to look at resiliency is to think of it as the "rubber ball effect," - the ability to bounce back or rebound from adversity.

Far too often, people become consumed with adversity, the challenges and failures they encounter in life. They begin to only see the negative and obstacles in every situation. This can be especially true in the very difficult career of corrections.

We need to accept that adversity is a part of life, because it is. Eventually, everyone is affected by adversity, no one is exempt. The key is how you respond to the tough times when they inevitably happen. Do you wallow in self-pity, and adopt a woe is me attitude, or do you learn from the experience and vow to not let it get the best of you.

see [The Importance of Resiliency /page 5](#)

Ned Lamont
Governor

Rollin Cook
Commissioner

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Random Acts of Lifesaving

Thanks to the quick thinking of four Parole Officers on three separate occasions, three individuals are lucky to be alive.

While returning to the New Haven Parole Office recently, Parole Officer Jose Cartagena came upon what appeared to be a traffic accident at an intersection. When one of the two cars stopped at the intersection in front of Parole Officer Cartagena's vehicle circled around the first car stopped at the light, Cartagena began to do the same. That is when he noticed the driver of the vehicle with his head tilted back – unresponsive. He also noticed another individual in the vehicle attempting to revive the driver by shaking him.

Cartagena immediately pulled over and approached the vehicle in an effort to lend assistance. The second individual informed Parole Officer Cartagena that he had found a bag filled with a white powdery substance in the vehicle. After making sure that 911 had been called, Cartagena quickly retrieved a Narcan (Narcan is used for the reversal of known or suspected opioid overdoses) kit from his car.

Within a few seconds of administering a spray dose of Narcan, the individual began to regain some movement and began shaking. Parole Officer Cartagena attended to the individual until the first responders with the local fire department arrived. Soon the individual regained complete consciousness and was transported via ambulance to the hospital. Once the scene was secure, Parole Officer Cartagena continued on his way back to the Parole Office quite possibly having just saved the life of a total stranger.



Lifesavers (L to R): Parole Officers Lindsay Carrington, Martin Shafman, Jessica Castillo, and Jose Cartagena display a dose of Narcan similar to ones used to save the lives of three overdose victims.

Back in May of this year, Parole Officers Martin Shafman and Jessica Castillo found themselves in a similar situation as Parole Officer Cartagena. While driving in New Britain, the two Parole Officers passed by a car – not proceeding through a green light – and saw the driver slumped over the steering wheel. They immediately jumped into action: pulling over, stopping traffic, calling 911, and attending to the driver.

Parole Officer Castillo checked, and was unable to detect a pulse from the passed out driver. At that point Parole Officer Shafman administered a dose of Narcan to the unconscious civilian. Within a minute or two, an ambulance and the New Britain Police arrived on the scene. The paramedics took over and announced the civilian had a pulse. Shortly thereafter while lying on the stretcher, the civilian awoke and was responsive. After giving the necessary information to the police, the two Parole Officers continued down the road having quite likely saved the life of a total stranger.

The third incident of a Parole Officer's quick actions resulting in a life being saved is a bit different than the other two, but no less heroic.

5,000 Wheelchairs and Counting

Thanks to the hard work of Vocational Instructor Douglas Castle, 5,000 individuals in need of wheelchairs have received the gift of mobility. In return, instructor Castle was awarded for achieving this remarkable milestone. The Unified School District #1's Cheshire Correctional Institution's school has participated in a long-running partnership with Joni and Friends, a nationally based non-profit organization which gives, "practical help to individuals impacted by disability." Through the organizations Wheels for the World and Harvest Project programs, Joni and Friends local "Chair Corps" volunteers collect used wheelchairs, which they deliver to Cheshire's Wheelchair Repair Vocational Program, led by Vocational Instructor Douglas Castle. He then, along with his students, restores the old wheelchairs to like-new condition.

Students in this class are trained in all aspects of restoration including upholstery, mechanical engineering, and cosmetic refurbishment. Restored chairs are then distributed worldwide, with the most



Unified School District #1's Superintendent Maria Pirro-Simmons, Cheshire CI Warden Kenneth Butricks, Deputy Wardens Jesus Guadarrama and Jennifer Peterson, along with representatives from Joni and Friends were on hand to present Vocational Instructor Douglas Castle (holding plaque) with an award for repairing 5,000 wheelchairs.

recent shipment of 240 wheelchairs ending up being distributed in Amman, Jordan. Due to recent conflicts, Amman has taken in thousands of refugees, many with disabilities in need of assistance.

The USD #1 Wheelchair Repair Vocational Program is one of only 15 correctionally-based programs in the country and the only restoration site in the Northeast.

Recently, Vocational Instructor Castle was the recipient of an achievement award in recognition of reaching the impressive milestone of having restored 5,000 wheelchairs through the Wheelchair Repair Vocational Program. The award was presented during a recent visit to the Cheshire facility by Paul Dorthalina, Sr., Manager for Domestic Operations for Joni and Friends. Also on hand for the presentation were USD#1 Superintendent Maria Pirro-Simmons, Cheshire CI's Warden Kenneth Butricks, Deputy Wardens Peterson and Guadarrama, Principal Heather Verdi and representatives from the local Chair Corps.

In accepting the award, Mr. Castle expressed his passion for restoring the chairs.

"Doug is very humble, but it is important to celebrate his accomplishment and work, as well as, the good work of the students," said Superintendent Pirro-Simmons.

Warden Butricks, in response to Mr. Dorthalina's statement that the quality of Mr. Castle's work "is great" stated, "You don't have to tell us, the work they are doing is incredible."

Indeed, everyone at the USD #1 school at Cheshire CI is very proud of the work of Doug Castle and his students in the Wheelchair Repair Program, and are excited that their efforts have been formally recognized.

VetDogs Graduation

Osborn Correctional Institution Warden Nick Rodriguez is proud to announce that Counselor Joanne Smith attended the America's VetDogs Foundation's most recent canine graduation, which is also known as Celebration Saturday on June 29, at the organizations Smithtown NY headquarters. Then Deputy Warden Rodriguez originally brought the Vet Dog Program to Osborn CI where it is overseen by Counselor Supervisor Brian Moore and Counselor Smith.

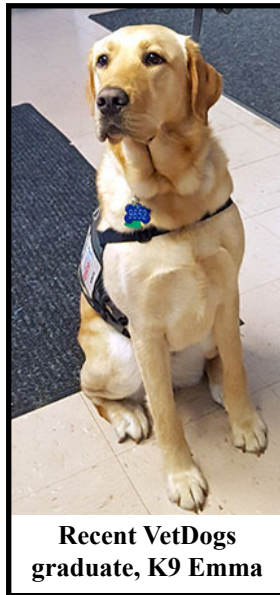
K9 Emma, one of the first dogs in Osborn's training program and Buckels, a dog who came to Osborn for additional training as a young adult, were both paired with disabled veterans and these veterans were honored at the Celebration Saturday ceremony.

Once the dogs leave the prison training program, they return to the Vet Dog Foundation where they are assessed for their abilities and temperament and are put through more formalized training based on the veterans' individual needs. They are then matched with their veteran and go through a two-week training process together at the Foundation's Long Island Campus.

In addition to her task training, taught to her by the prison dog handlers, Emma was also taught nightmare interruption skills and hearing detection skills. With this she is able to alert her veteran to a ringing phone, a knock on the door or doorbell, and the activation of a smoke alarm, as well as wake him in the event he has a nightmare. Her veteran has stated that she has truly changed his life since the day he met her and he cannot wait for the next chapter of their lives. They have gone on to South Carolina where she and her new partner will no doubt have a great life together.

K9 Buckels was also taught at least eight specific skills required to assist his veteran, including bracing him for support when he becomes unsteady, seizure assistance, and guiding him to a safe area when he has extreme migraines which cause him to have serious vision impairments. His veteran told us that he was skeptical at first, but that Buckels changed his life within the first 24 hours of meeting him. He stated that he now feels like he is able to be is "old self" again. Buckels and his veteran will have a great life together in Hawaii.

According to Counselor Smith, words cannot express how truly amazing this program is and what it does for disabled veterans who bravely served our country and sacrificed everything for our freedom. Watching service dogs being placed with these veterans is heartwarming and knowing that America's finest can live "life without boundaries" is truly inspiring.



Recent VetDogs graduate, K9 Emma

Around the Cell Block



FLORIDA - When Hurricane Dorian was threatening to ravage Florida, the state's Department of Corrections moved more than 2,000 inmates to other facilities. During Hurricane Michael last year, nearly 3,000 inmates were evacuated from Panhandle prisons after the storm damaged area facilities. One of them, Gulf Annex, reopened to inmates only this summer.

MISSOURI - The Missouri Department of Corrections and a local university are partnering up to provide college-level classes designed to train long-term inmates to become ministers.

WASHINGTON - A man in Kennewick, WA who called police to report that his car had been stolen wound up behind bars himself when police discovered he had allegedly been robbing a store across the street when his vehicle was taken.

**Total
Supervised
Population
on
September 9, 2019**

17,601

**On September 9, 2018
the population was
18,125**

The Importance of Resiliency from page 1

Resiliency is like a muscle you can develop it - make it stronger. The following are some ways in which you can strengthen your resiliency muscle:

- Learn from your experiences. Think of how you coped with hardships in the past, and draw upon the skills and strategies that helped you through the rough times. Use those skills to guide your future behavior.
- Building strong, positive relationships with loved ones and friends can provide you with needed support and acceptance in both good times and bad. Establish other important connections by volunteering or joining a faith or spiritual community.
- Do not ignore your problems. Figure out what needs to be done, make a plan, and take action. Your situation will undoubtedly improve if you work at it. Conversely, if you do nothing about your problems, they will only get worse.
- Perhaps most importantly, be sure to take care of yourself. If you're not doing so already, try to partake in some form of exercise on a regular basis. Also, make sure to get plenty of sleep, and try to eat a healthy diet. I also suggest practicing stress management and relaxation techniques.

Remember, resiliency is about how you react to situations, it is not about toughing it out, or suffering silently and going it alone. In fact it is quite the opposite, a key component to being resilient is the ability to reach out to others for support when you need it.

Organizations also need to be resilient if they are to achieve their goals. Take our agency for example, when we took back the responsibility for offenders' healthcare a little more than a year ago we faced many challenges, the most obvious being a shortage of qualified healthcare professionals in both managerial, and rank and file positions. Although it has not been easy, as an agency we persevered - restructuring the healthcare organization and continuing to fill position vacancies. Another great example of the Department's resiliency is the way in which we identified the problem and created a new way in which to deal with our young adult population. Today, both the TRUE and WORTH units are national models being replicated across the country.

The bottom line is that we all experience difficult times (whether as individuals or organizations), but with the right mindset and plan of action, we can bounce back from bad situations stronger and wiser.

Thank you for your commitment to the important work you do on a daily basis – you make me proud to be associated with this agency.

Surprise Swearing In from page 1

The eight Deputy Wardens included: Solomon Baymon, Northern CI; Christopher Brunelle, York CI; Ernestine Green, Hartford CC; Thomas Kenny, Robinson CI; Carolyn McClendon, Robinson CI; Carlos Nunez, Corrigan-Radgowski CC; Nicole Thibeault, Osborn CI; and Craig Washington, Hartford CC.

Once the Deputy Wardens were sworn in, Commissioner Cook was under the belief that the ceremony had come to the end. However, the members of his Executive Team had a different plan. Deputy Commissioner Cheryl Cepelak revealed the surprise plan to swear in the Commissioner as a gesture of their respect and admiration for him. She also announced an additional surprise that the Commissioner's wife had, unbeknownst to him, traveled to the training academy to be present for his swearing in.

With his wife at his side, Commissioner Cook repeated the oath - administered by Deputy Commissioner Angel Quiros - following which Deputy Commissioner Cepelak presented the Commissioner with his badge. With all the swearing-ins complete, Commissioner Cook thanked everyone for being part of the special occasion.

Up to the Challenge

Once again the Department of Correction's Special Operation's Group (SOG) Unit competed valiantly in the annual CT SWAT Challenge finishing as high as fourth in the Colt Cup event, 10th place in the grueling physical training challenge, and finishing 17th out of 31 teams in the overall competition.

The Connecticut SWAT Challenge is a nationally renowned event, sponsored by the West Hartford Police Department. This year's event marked the 15th anniversary of the annual CT SWAT Challenge, held on three very warm days, August 13-15, with events being held in Avon, Simsbury, and West Hartford.

SWAT teams from ten states participated in this year's event, with teams representing local and State Police Departments, the Department of Correction, and the Army Military Police - with one of the teams coming from as far away as Texas to compete.

During the Colt Cup, in which the SOG team had

their best finish, Lieutenant Tony Colella's successful target engagement enabled the rescue team of Captain Soang Parnishkul, Lieutenants Paul Senita, Joshua Sheehan, and Ryan Visneau to negotiate obstacles and engage



L to R: Lt. Joshua Sheehan, CO Jose Rodriguez and Cpt. Soang Parniskul take aim during the CT SWAT Challenge.

additional targets in order to recover a "downed" officer.

The final challenge of the event was the physical training challenge held at the West Hartford reservoir. It featured 35 stations beginning with a timed 50-yard swim in the reservoir. It took the teams around two hours to complete the five mile long course, all the while having to continuously carry a kettle bell, medicine ball, and sandbag.

The intrinsic value of SWAT Challenges can be measured on a variety of levels: tactics, movement techniques, equipment trends, professional contacts, inter-agency familiarization, fitness levels and shooting proficiency to name a few.

Members of this year's SOG team which competed in the CT SWAT Challenge included: Lieutenant Tony Colella, Correction Officer Steve Congelos, Correction Officer Bryan Depaulo, Correction Officer Kevin Dubuque, Correction Officer Sean McCartin, Correction Officer Thurman Musshorn, Captain Soang Parnishkul, Correction Officer Jose Rodriguez, Lieutenant Paul Senita, Lieutenant Joshua Sheehan, Lieutenant Ryan Visneau, and the Team Captain - Captain Edward Guzman.

Please join the Director of Operations Roger Bowles in congratulating the members of the Special Operations Group (SOG) for admirably representing the Department of Correction throughout this year's CT SWAT Challenge.



Captain Soang Parniskul (C) goes over the wall, the final obstacle of the CT SWAT Challenge.

Military Support Picnic

The members of the Department of Correction's Military Peer Support Program (MPSP) held their 11th Annual Military Appreciation/Family Fun Day at Hammonasset Beach in Madison, CT on July 27, 2019.



The event was free to all military veterans working for the Department of Correction, and their family members. A buffet style lunch was served and many items including children's bicycles and various gift baskets were raffled off to those in attendance.

A total of 64 individuals, 19 of whom were veterans, enjoyed themselves on a beautiful, sunny, summer afternoon making new friends and receiving the appreciation of our Department for their fine service. The MPSP supports employees of the Connecticut Department of Correction throughout their deployment and even during their transition back to work. Since its inception in 2008, the members of the MPSP have worked with dozens of military staff through phone calls, emails, letters and outreach.

A big thank you to all the members of the MPSP committee, along with the support of the training academy's director, Kim Jones, for their efforts to make this year's annual picnic the great success that it was.

Resuscitations from page 2

Parole Officer Lindsay Carrington was in the process of conducting a scheduled home visit back in August when things took an unexpected turn for the worse. While interviewing the parolee in the driveway of her residence, the parolee began to stagger, losing her balance and slurring her words. After initially denying taking any foreign substances, the parolee eventually admitted to recently, "snorting a bag" of heroin. It was not long before she had become pale and sweaty. Parole Officer Carrigan laid the parolee on her back and then went to her vehicle to call 911, and retrieve a dose of Narcan.

There was no response to the initial dose of the drug. In fact, as a Shelton Police Officer arrived on the scene, the parolee had completely stopped breathing. The Police Officer administered two more doses of Narcan, which elicited a gurgle from the overdose victim – her breathing was slow and labored. At this time Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and two more Police Officers arrived. Once the EMTs provided the parolee with oxygen, she began to breathe normally and was transported via ambulance to the hospital. The emergency room doctor completed discharge paperwork with a diagnosis of a drug overdose and the parolee was released to Parole custody. Although the parolee has since been returned to custody, she is lucky to be alive thanks to the actions of Parole Officer Carrington.

All three incidents highlight not only the unpredictable nature of the job of a Parole Officer, but also the quality of character of the individuals who comprise the Agency's Division of Parole and Community Services.

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An Honorable Event

The Connecticut Department of Correction's Honor Guard Unit participated in the Correctional Peace Officer Foundation's (CPOF) Annual National Memorial Ceremony. The Annual National Memorial Ceremony titled *Project 2000* took place June 6-9, 2019 in Louisville, Kentucky. Every year the CPOF puts together an incredible National Memorial Service and seminar to honor those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice by losing



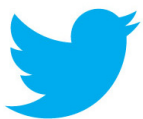
Honor Guard Commander Sergio Perez addresses the audience during the Correctional Peace Officer Foundation's (CPOF) Annual National Memorial Ceremony.

their lives in the line of duty. In addition to remembering the fallen, CPOF invites and honors the families providing them acknowledgment, love, and unconditional support for their tremendous loss. Present this year were Honor Guards from around the United States and Canada. Out of the many Honor Guards present, our very own Connecticut Department of Corrections Honor Guard was chosen to

present the colors during the Annual National Memorial Ceremony. They were humbled to have been chosen to perform the special honor.

For Honor Guard member Correctional Counselor Eric McKenzie the experience was one he will cherish for the rest of his career. Prior to attending the event, he was not sure exactly what to expect. Having experienced it, he gained a newfound respect and appreciation for not only the work done within the CT Department of Correction, but he also felt he had become a part of the worldwide brother and sisterhood of correctional professionals. To be a part of all the Honor Guard units throughout the United States and Canada which came together to honor the families, and those who have lost their lives in the line of duty instilled Counselor McKenzie with an overwhelming sense of pride and accomplishment.

With the support of the Agency, the Department's Honor Guard was able to raise a total of \$5,700 for the CPO Foundation and the Kids Room. The proceeds collected will go towards supporting the children of the families who attend the yearly memorial service by providing gifts, games, and field trips. The members of the Honor Guard would like to thank all the staff that continuously support their efforts in collecting monetary donations to support the families of those we have lost. Our time, efforts, and presentation are not only a reflection of us, but of the effort, strength, and unwavering support of each of you within this department. The CPOF prides itself on "Taking Care of Our Own," and after attending Project 2000, the Agency's Honor Guard members saw firsthand that the foundation stays true to its word, vision, and mission.



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U.S. Attorney's Award

Parole Supervisor Frank Mirto and Parole Officer Jennifer Sullivan of the Special Management Unit received the U.S. Attorney's Award for their outstanding investigative and collaborative efforts on U.S. v. Andrew Cunningham. The two were recognized during a ceremony held at New Haven's City Hall on Friday, June 14, 2019.

In 2015 Andrew Cunningham was convicted of Aggravated Sexual Abuse of a minor after traveling from Connecticut to Illinois to have illicit sexual contact with a 14-year-old girl he met online. In 2017, he used an online platform to meet another 13-year-old female from Tennessee, where he enticed her to send sexually explicit photographs and encouraged her to travel to Connecticut to meet him. Fortunately, this never happened due to a family member getting involved and contacting the CT State Police. The CT State Police worked with Parole and began an undercover operation, having an operative pose as the minor's friend. Cunningham engaged in sexually explicit conversations with the minor's "friend" and arranged her transportation to Connecticut via bus. On May 17, 2017, Cunningham was arrested at the bus stop waiting for her arrival.

Due to the extraordinary collaborative working relationship between the Federal and State law enforcement and the Division of Parole and Community Services, and the CT State Police, Cunningham was sentenced to 18 years of incarceration.

Please join Director Ellison in congratulating Parole Supervisor Mirto and Parole Officer Sullivan for their outstanding work and well-deserved recognition.



Parole Officer Jennifer Sullivan, Parole Director Eric Ellison, and Parole Manager Frank Mirto at the U.S. Attorney's award ceremony.

Outstanding Super Team Member



**Principal HR Specialist
Diane Fowler.**

Congratulations to Principal Human Resources Specialist Diane Fowler for being selected as the July, - September, 2019, winner of the Human Resources HR Super Team Member Award.

Ms. Fowler exemplifies the guiding principles and values of the Department's Human Resources Unit. At the time of the health services transition she stepped up to assume the challenging role of labor lead for that team. She is a business partner who builds collaborative solutions enabled by her strong working relationships with management, our labor partners, and her co-workers. In concert with her HR and health services team members she develops processes and provides guidance that enhance the operations of the Health Services Unit. She is adept at identifying and implementing team solutions that are effective, balanced and consistent.

She consistently demonstrates dedication to performing her duties at the highest possible level.