



Newsletter of the New Jersey Department of Corrections

In This Issue

Serving those who served

Military Service Liaison Committee creates important connections for veteran staff members and their families.

Pg. 1

A walk to save lives

Staff gathered to pay respects to those lost to suicide and raise awareness of mental health.

Pg. 3

Photos

Class 254 graduates, as NJDOC says goodbye to some familiar faces.

Pg. 4

A journey of a thousand miles

SCPO Jesus Silva's long road to the NJDOC began in Peru -- with a stop as a garbage collector.

Pg. 5

Autism advocate visits NJDOC

Alex Mann is on a mission to foster better communication between Law Enforcement and those on the autism spectrum.

Pg. 6



The Military Service Liaison Committee has become a familiar presence at staff events over the last year.

In service to those who served our country

Military Service Liaison Committee is here for staff veterans and their families

By Mackenzie Fitchett
Senior Public Information Officer

If you've been to a staff event recently, you've likely seen the MSLC, which serves as an important resource for the more than 300 NJDOC staff members who have served in the military.

Antoinette Minors, executive assistant, was inspired by her father's service in the United States Air Force to create the MSLC. The group started small, with offerings of coffee and pastries along with pins and challenge coins on Veteran's Day. But the committee has now grown, become more visible, connected with employees and

cont'd pg.2





MSLC, cont'd

brought important information about veteran benefits to those who need it.

The committee currently has 10 members who hit the ground running with a tour, visiting each facility and bringing along information about not only the committee, but veteran services available to both civilian and custody staff and their families, and how to access them.

With the tour complete, each region now has a liaison for the MSLC in each region of the state, able to assist staff with anything and everything related to veteran benefits and services. Minors also makes herself available to anyone who may need assistance or is looking to participate in the committee.

Along with the tour, the committee is looking to host annual events for veterans and other staff members, which will bring different

informative organizations together while celebrating and thanking the veterans for their service.

The main requirement to join this committee is that the individual has to have served in the military themselves, or have a family member who served. Members from this committee also participate in trainings, such as Suicide Prevention Awareness and Law Enforcement Engagement, to help offer the best and most up-to-date services for those who need them.

The committee works with organizations including Keep Our Veterans Alive (KOVA), the Department of Veterans Affairs and American Legion. The committee has also participated in Operation Gratitude, collecting drawings and cards to send to those currently serving in the military overseas.

For more information about the committee, email to Antoinette.Minors-Ferguson@doc.nj.gov.



Antoinette Minors started the MSLC last year, honoring her father's service in the U.S. Air Force. She's shown here with committee member Bob Looby.

(Mackenzie Fitchett / NJDOC)





WALKING THE WALK TO PREVENT SUICIDE, SELF-HARM

By Mackenzie Fitchett
Senior Public Information Officer

On a beautiful September day, staff at COHQ gathered to commemorate Suicide Prevention Awareness Month with a walk organized by their Wellness Committee.

The group walked the grounds together following “Smile Mile” signs to help raise awareness for the cause of 49,500 deaths in 2020. As staff came together for the walk, they stopped along the way to pick up special surprises laid out along the route.

The first table was covered with inspirational pens, notebooks and bracelets that read ‘Be Your Own Hero’, ‘Be Brave’ and ‘Be Strong.’ Another table provided the group with informative booklets that touched on how to help someone in crisis, and how to recognize and assist those with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. At the end of the trail was a food truck along with another table that held information about programs available to the staff of the NJDOC including 4BLUENJ.

While the walk only took place on one day, mental health programs for staff are always available.

4BLUENJ, is a helpline for all NJDOC staff, both civilian and custody, which offers free, confidential peer support through calls, emails and chats on their website. Call 1.888.425.8365 or visit 4bluenj.com. Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m .



Wellness Coordinator Nicole Sargenti and Secretarial Assistant 1 Vanessa Damato led walkers on a circuit around the COHQ grounds to raise awareness of suicide and self-harm prevention. (Chris Carden / NJDOC)





Class 254 graduates, as NJDOC says farewell to some key personnel



CSTA Class 254's graduation day was a bittersweet one for the Department, as we bid farewell to three respected longtime employees. Deputy Commissioner Willie Bonds, Director Oliver Keller and Major Wayne Manstream have retired, but their contributions and legacies are strong. The Commissioner's Physical Fitness Award was renamed in Manstream's honor.

Photos by Chris Carden / NJDOC



A LONG ROAD TO NJDOC

By Chris Carden
Deputy Director, Public Information

In a cramped office at the Northern Range, SCPO Jesus Silva leans back in his chair and remembers his life in his native Peru.

“In Peru, I was just a young kid that lived with my parents,” he said. “I never worked before I came over here. I never had a job. I didn't speak English. I wanted to get out.”

The dream, as with so many immigrants, was to come to America; get a job, get married, and live in relative prosperity.

After a mandatory year of service in the Peruvian military, Silva got his chance and joined family members already in the Garden State, green card in hand.

“Coming to America, land of the freedom. I could start a business, have more opportunity,” he says.

But without language skills, or a college education, Silva's opportunities were limited. A buddy eventually asked him if he wanted a job with benefits. Silva's response: “What is that? I didn't know what it was. He said, ‘you know, medical and stuff like that’. I was like, ‘I guess’. So he got me a job with Jiffy Lube.”

But changing oil doesn't come with benefits as attractive as those offered by the township of Parsippany, New Jersey, if you don't mind a little dirty work. Silva began his life as a garbage man.

“I met a girl, fell in love, got married, had benefits, I thought I had it made ... But I was



SCPO Jesus Silva at the Northern Range.
(Chris Carden / NJDOC)

short on money. So I had to get a part-time job. I was working for FedEx scanning packages at the airport.”

“With garbage, obviously, you pick up trash cans, all day long. And I was like, ‘I got to find something else.’”

Silva had family members in law enforcement and the military. A cousin suggested he become a cop. All he needed was to take the Civil Service exam ... But first, Silva had to first become an American citizen.

He took the test. Passed. Took the Civil Service exam. Passed. Four years later, in 2005, the Department of Corrections called.

“I've been doing firearms and teaching since 2012. So I did it for like 12 years ... I was an adjunct at Mountainview and then when they closed the institution, I became a permanent adjunct at the range.”

Silva recalls wise words as he considers the long journey from Peru and the jobs he held to get here: “My mother always says ‘when you like something, you put your mind to it, you do it good. Whatever you don't like, just don't do it’.”



Autism advocate visits NJDOC

By Mackenzie Fitchett
Senior Public Information Officer

Autism advocate Alex Mann paid a special visit to NJDOC HQ on Sept. 25 -- his 424th visit to a law enforcement agency and his very first visit to a Corrections Agency .

Mann has made it his mission to visit as many police departments as he can, with his newest goal of visiting 500 departments. Mann, 23, lives with autism and uses his visits to advocate for those on the autism spectrum and the best way for law enforcement to communicate with them. He’s visited agencies in several states, but this was his first time visiting a corrections department.

During his tour, Mann met with NJDOC Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn, Esq., who pointed out that the NJDOC has the largest

police force in the state, and presented him with a Commissioner’s challenge coin.

The day continued with a demonstration from the Special Operations Group (SOG) who talked to him about trainings from the Correctional Staff Training Academy to K9 training. The group showed Mann multiple K9 officers who have learned to sniff out electronic devices in facilities and are trained for missing person searches.

Mann also received a tour of the SOG vehicles, which included a testing of the air horn and the emergency lights.

The tour ended with a visit to the Central Transportation Unit where Mann learned about facility transfers for incarcerated persons all across the state.



Members of the Special Operations Group (SOG) with Alex Mann and K9s Liberty and Wentz

