



In This Issue

YOUR VOICE COUNTS SURVEY ROLLS OUT

Don't miss your chance to share valuable insights with Department leadership. Here's all you need to know. Pg. 1

NJDOC-made, on a beach near you!

DEPTCOR carpentry vocational training program makes lifeguard benches and more. Pg. 2

Photos: Ceremonial Unit supports NJ Special Olympics Summer Games

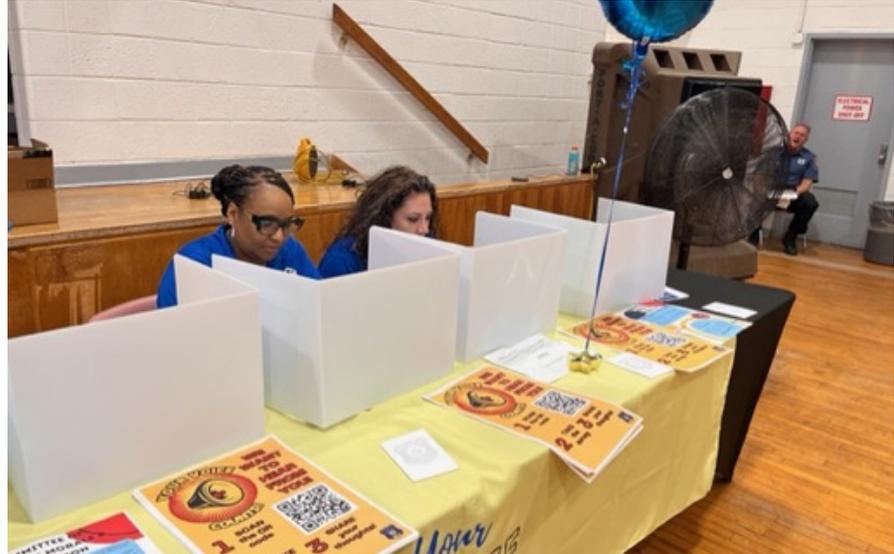
Pg. 4

A flag for his father

For SCPO Gary McCombs, Jr., corrections is a family business. Two flags honor their tradition of service. Pg. 5

A year of firsts for DEI

Conferences, a survey, and more on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion efforts. Pg. 6



The survey is voluntary, anonymous and only takes a few minutes. Ambassadors will be in each facility to share it.

SURVEY SAYS ...

Your Voice Counts survey rolls out across NJDOC -- make your voice heard!

By Amy Z. Quinn

July 24 brought the debut of an important new way to provide feedback directly to Departmental leadership.

The Your Voice Counts survey is now open, and is available to all New Jersey Department of Corrections staff members. This voluntary, anonymous survey only takes a few minutes to complete and is your chance to take an active role in creating a better NJDOC.

Your Voice Counts is an employee-centered initiative with a goal of creating lasting change through employee engagement. In the coming months, look for focus groups and one-on-one listening sessions with

cont'd p.2





Survey, cont'd

Departmental leadership. The survey is the first step and will inform the efforts of the Committee of Employee Morale and Innovation (C.E.M.I.) going forward.

In a staff-wide email, Commissioner Victoria L. Kuhn encouraged all employees to take the survey.

“You have the power to create lasting, meaningful changes in our department, and taking the quick survey is your chance to tell us how you really feel – what we’re doing right, what we could do better, and what challenges you face,” she said.

Now, more than 60 ambassadors are visiting each facility, sharing the survey and providing instructions on how to take it. You can scan the QR code, visit the website, or spend a few minutes at a tablet completing it right there. It’s voluntary, anonymous, quick and easy.

For July’s C.E.M.I. open house, along with displays from more than a dozen employee groups and units, the survey was available on tablets and staff took part, while enjoying food and fellowship with their colleagues. More than 2,000 staff members so far have taken a few minutes to complete [the survey](#) and offer their thoughts.

For questions about the survey, email YourVoiceCounts@doc.nj.gov.



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THE CRITICAL INCIDENT NEGOTIATIONS TEAM IS LOOKING FOR CANDIDATES TO JOIN THIS IMPORTANT MISSION.

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WANT MORE INFORMATION?
EMAIL LT. DAVID KUPERBERG
DAVID.KUPERBERG@DOC.NJ.GOV

NJDOC-made products a Shore thing

The *Philadelphia Inquirer* [recently featured](#) the DEPTCOR vocational carpentry program in a story, spotlighting several products that appear on Jersey Shore beaches.

For the last five years, incarcerated persons in the DEPTCOR Carpentry Program at Bayside State Prison and Garden State Youth Correctional Facility have been constructing lifeguard benches, beach boxes (the square lockers that store chairs and umbrellas), park benches and wooden walkways that stretch across the sand, which increase accessibility. Great work!



A YEAR OF FIRSTS FOR DEI EFFORTS, AND MORE TO COME

By Amy Z. Quinn

From the creation of several inaugural events to climate survey results that will guide next steps, the commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion in the New Jersey Department of Corrections is evident at every level.

In 2020, Assistant Commissioner Melinda Haley, Esq. took the reins of the then-newly-created Division of Diversity and Legal Affairs, with a mission of creating a culture in which the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion provide a foundation for everything we do. Early goals centered around training Department personnel on DEI, and the creation of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Council.

The all-volunteer DEI Council provides support to the Chief Diversity Officer by developing and implementing initiatives to celebrate diversity and increase inclusion. The council makes recommendations to AC Haley, including identifying opportunities for improving equity in training and other initiatives.

In December, the inaugural Council will conclude its term, which was extended from two to three years due to COVID-19. During their term, members completed DEI exercises and engaged in activities meant to prepare them to serve as DEI ambassadors in their facilities, should they choose to continue the work of the Council.



The "Courageous Conversations" event in June was part of Pride Month, and another DEI "first."

The Employee Climate Survey completed last fall was another major goal of the Council, and has led to valuable insights that are already shaping subsequent actions in the DEI space, AC Haley said.

"We wanted to use the survey to inform different initiatives and activities going forward," she said.

The survey's responses showed there is plenty of work to be done, particularly in areas that speak to how valued, listened to and empowered employees feel. It revealed stark differences in perception exist between custody staff and various marginalized groups.

cont'd p.6



Ceremonial Unit supports Special Olympics Summer Games



For the second year in a row, NJDOC was asked to lead and command the Honor Guard comprised of officers from several participating law enforcement agencies at the Special Olympics New Jersey Summer Games on the College of New Jersey campus.

Photos by Chris Carden / NJDOC



A FLAG FOR HIS FATHER

Officer receives flags to honor father's service

By Chris Carden
Public Information Officer

For SCPO Gary McCombs, Jr., corrections is a family business. “My father did 30 years at New Jersey State Prison. He retired in 2009, and passed away from cancer on February 2nd,” said McCombs.

For his father’s years of dedicated service to the Department, Major Wayne Manstream of the Correctional Staff Training Academy presented SCPO McCombs, Jr. with an American flag in a military fold. It is the second flag presented to the family by the Department.

“It’s monumental to me because my father was my idol. I always aspired to be just like him, which is why I followed in my father and my grandfather’s footsteps,” McCombs said.

The corrections legacy runs three generations deep in McCombs’ family. In 1966, his grandfather, Willis E. Morton, joined the department as an officer at what was once referred to as Bordentown, or Albert C. Wagner Youth Correctional Facility, moving up through the ranks to eventually become Director of Operations until his retirement in 2009.

His grandfather’s wife, Brigitte Mitchell-Morton retired in 2009 from the NJDOC as an Assistant Commissioner.

“I can look (at this flag) each and every day, persevere in my career and keep moving forward. It shows what can be done in this



SCPO Gary McCombs, Jr.

department. I can go from being an officer all the way up to being the Commissioner if I want to. I’ve seen it in my family and this is really a symbol of that.”

McCombs, who serves in a recruitment capacity introducing others into the corrections community, says the flags for his grandfather and father will hold a place of honor in his home.



DEI, continued

To that end, the Your Voice Counts initiative and the Committee of Employee Morale and Innovation (C.E.M.I.) were created to reinforce efforts like Employee Wellness and DEI, and to create channels of communication between NJDOC employees and Department leadership.

Employee participation in the DEI survey led directly to the creation the Your Voice Counts initiative. Now it's time to go deeper. YVC has launched a follow-up survey, digging into those insights.

“Our workforce is diverse, but there is more work to be done,” said AC Haley, encouraging anyone who may not have taken the previous survey to take a few minutes to complete the Your Voice Counts survey.

In recent months, the Black Leadership Summit, the Empowering Women Conference, and the Courageous Conversations LGBTQIA+ event created spaces for sharing experiences and exploring themes like acceptance, leadership and authenticity.

The events also explored an important aspect of DEI efforts that is often overlooked: Belonging. Think of inclusion as something internal, what the department does to include all of us, and belonging as the feeling that those efforts can create, AC Haley explained.

“Belonging to me is that feeling that comes from [inclusion efforts], that inclusive feeling that I am part of the team and I am part of the

process,” AC Haley said. Inclusion is what we do, and belonging is the spirit it creates.

Moving forward, the Division is in the process of hiring a DEI Coordinator. With a full-time DEI employee on-board, Haley said her office looks to significantly increase our efforts which will include the establishment Employee Resources Groups and additional collaborations with other units such as the Wellness Committee.

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