

STAFF EXPERIENCES FIGHTING COVID-19

Highlighting the stories of exemplary individuals serving in the PA Department of Corrections

FEBRUARY 2021



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Corrections is proud to be the home of individuals that go above and beyond in executing their public service duties. Of the many lessons that the COVID-19 pandemic has impressed upon the department, the reminder that any person can be a leader and bring us into a better tomorrow has become most evident. At a time when individuals are understandably thinking about their own well-being and that of their families, the department has seen no shortage of the kindness and professionalism needed to overcome the challenges we have been faced with.

In the following pages, you will find a selection of stories that exemplifies the sense of community and teamwork that has fueled the DOC over the last 11 months. A special thank you to each and every staff person who has given their time, energy and in some cases, health, to serve this commonwealth.

MEDICAL STAFF

CHS – Kathleen Favaloro | Registered Nurse Supervisor

In May 2020, Ms. Favaloro volunteered to assist in the delivery of medical services to the Transitional Housing unit at SCI Phoenix. This unit was being utilized to assist in the depopulation effort of SCI Huntingdon. Ms. Favaloro spent 4 long weeks traveling up and down route 476 daily, assisting in this monumental task. She received many accolades during her time at SCI Phoenix. After completing a mandatory quarantine for 2 weeks following her deployment to SCI Phoenix, Ms. Favaloro immediately rolled up her sleeves and jumped right back into the fold, working long hard days at SCI Chester while the pandemic battered this facility's staffing in the Medical Department.

After working her regular supervisory job from 0800-1700 each day, she was pressed into service to guarantee RN coverage was always present evenings, overnight and on weekend shifts. She undoubtedly kept the medical department afloat while over half of the staff were out due to COVID related issues and resignations ensued. RN Favaloro has a very caring soul; she is a great nurse for many reasons, but her compassion for people is at the top of the list for her exceptional qualities. She cares for the inmates and her fellow co-workers. She always greets people with a smile and laugh whenever you stop by to talk with her. Despite the pressures of the job and the COVID-19 pandemic, she can be counted on to treat the job as her number one priority. The only thing that will pull her away is if one of her cats get sick!!! It should come

as no surprise that she is a huge animal lover and she routinely assists with the facility's dog program whenever she is needed. Ms. Favaloro exemplifies exemplary performance in the Department of Corrections.

FRA – Robert Cress | Licensed Practical Nurse

During the COVID-19 pandemic, LPN Robert Cress has consistently demonstrated superior performance and dedicated service in the face of unprecedented challenges and circumstances. His leadership and flexibility in performing his medical duties has undoubtedly been instrumental during his career with the Department of Corrections and his 8 years as a field medic in the United States Army; on both active and reserve status.

From the onset of COVID-19, LPN Cress has been on the front lines; providing COVID testing, medical screenings, performing contact tracing and developing and maintaining tracking spreadsheets. In addition, he has also conducted staff COVID-19 testing and screening. His dedication to the DOC expands beyond SCI Frackville and is evidenced by him selflessly volunteering to deploy to SCI Camp Hill to provide much needed assistance and relief during a period of significant medical staff shortage at that facility. During the six weeks that he was at SCI Camp Hill, he routinely worked double shifts and shared his vast experience and knowledge of infection control.

LPN Cress is an exemplary employee and true "Team Player". He takes great pride in his profession and service to the Commonwealth and he performs his work with compassion, dedication and professionalism.

QUE – Scott Bamat | Registered Nurse

RN Bamat supported the medical department by volunteering to work overtime on many occasions. During more than one pay period, he worked a 13 day stretch, including double shifts. He would ensure shifts were covered and staffing vacancies had minimal impact on the health and safety of the institution. RN Bamat is proactive and quick to learn the COVID-19 testing, swabbing and tracking procedures for both staff and inmates. He maintains and displays a positive



attitude each day and is a change agent for the institution, especially as COVID directives and procedures are frequently updated.



COA – Karen Merritt-Scully| Corrections Health Care Administrator

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Merritt-Scully has displayed superior leadership in the management of medical operations. She is proactive in the performance of her duties and timely in responding to issues related to the Medical Department. She is frequently in the institution well beyond her scheduled work hours, as well as her regular days off and that is demonstrative of her commitment to SCI Coal Township and the Department of Corrections.

On June 26, 2020, COVID-19 brought about a change in the facility mission of SCI Coal Township and the facility was designated as a male reception site for parole violators. This mission significantly impacted the daily operations of the Medical Department, which was tasked in ensuring that specific medical processes were available to all new receptions. These procedures exponentially added to COVID testing requirements, as well as other needs; to include detox services and MAT needs. Ms. Merritt-Scully ensured that procedures and resources were in place to meet the needs of this population.

In addition to overseeing the daily operations of the Medical Department, Ms. Merritt-Scully coordinates COVID testing and ensures that adequate test supplies are available to complete that testing. She also provides dissemination of test results to appropriate staff for appropriate follow-up action. The tasks and responsibilities associated with testing encompasses a great deal of time by the medical clinicians and the sensitivity related to testing requires constant oversight to ensure delivery of the appropriate medical care and use of quarantine measures to mitigate further spread of COVID-19; Ms. Merritt – Scully has handled this responsibility with flawless efforts.

While her efforts within her department are exemplary, it is her ability to assist in the collaboration of efforts outside of the Medical Department that are imperative to the management of this pandemic. She does not hesitate to reach out to her colleagues at the Bureau of Health Care Services and other institutions to discuss current efforts being exercised at

SCI Coal Township. Likewise, others reach out to her for recommendations and yes, at times, just someone to lend a listening ear.

SMR – Amanda Croyle | Registered Nurse Supervisor

Recently promoted RN Supervisor Amanda Croyle was thrust into an unexpected position as Acting CHCA when current CHCA Brian Hyde lost his wife to COVID-19 and the Infectious Control Nurse retired. Amanda has been doing 3 and sometimes 4 jobs trying to keep medical operating at a high level. On any given day, Amanda is working as shift RN, RN supervisor, Infectious Control Nurse and CHCA. The challenge presented to her is unbelievably difficult as SCI SMR has a population of 900 plus inmates deemed vulnerable due to pre-existing health conditions. Amanda is spearheading serial testing efforts among all our vulnerable inmates allowing COVID-19 to be detected as early as possible, thus reducing the probability of our inmates needing outside medical attention and reducing the impact of our outbreak on the community's resources. Through it all, Amanda has remained upbeat, positive and professional. Her approachability to both inmates and staff has fostered a commitment to team work and collaborations that are unprecedented

SMI – Alexa Lidwell | Corrections Health Care Administrator

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Lidwell has demonstrated exemplary leadership in the SCI Smithfield Medical Department. Ms. Lidwell has worked tirelessly alongside the medical staff at SCI Smithfield to ensure that the medical needs of the inmate population are met.

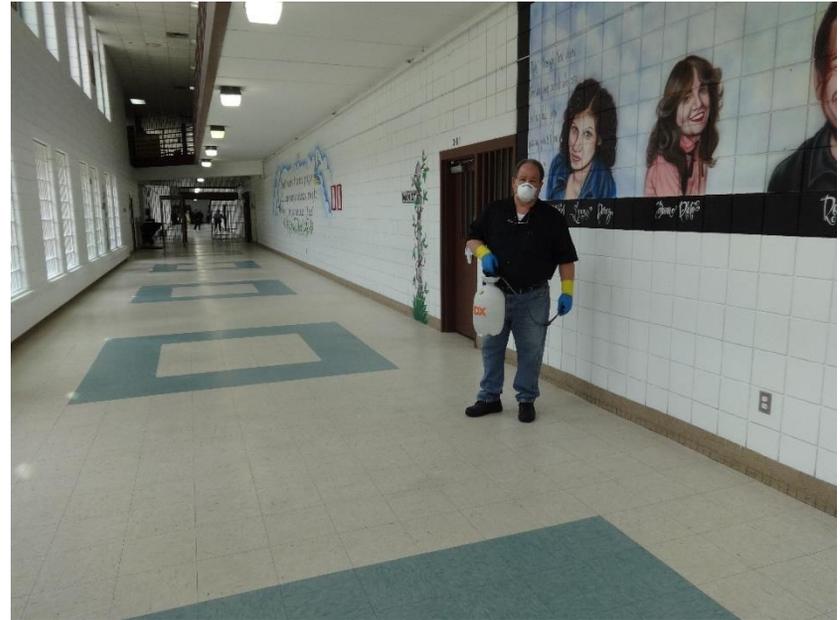
Despite high numbers of COVID-19 staff absences and the need to fill vacancies with agency medical staff, CHCA Lidwell inspired and motivated staff to provide the highest quality medical treatment to the inmates at this facility. While supervising 2 Registered Nurse Supervisors, 10 Registered Nurses, 12 Licensed Practical Nurses, and 2 Medical Assistants, she leads by example by working countless hours, working from home, and even providing leadership and support while battling COVID-19 herself and caring for her husband who also had COVID.

CHCA Lidwell coordinated mass COVID testing to facilitate inmate transfers and has been instrumental in the planning, development, and transition of SCI Smithfield into the primary male reception center for the Department of Corrections in January 2021. She has also monitored the medical Sapphire system to ensure complete accuracy of medical charting and documentation.

CHCA Lidwell is commended for her leadership, dedication, and passion, not just in the delivery of medical services at SCI Smithfield, but in her service to the Commonwealth.

CBS – Paul Smith | Infectious Control Nurse

Nurse Smith has an unmatched positive attitude and an excellent rapport with the inmates. He has been a calming presence, providing education and knowledge of the Pandemic to everyone at the facility. He has spent several hours speaking with inmates and staff, touring housing units, administering COVID tests, and addressing a wide range of medical concerns. He was also instrumental in the planning and logistics for a mass flu-shot clinic in the fall, in which SCI-Cambridge Springs had an inmate participation rate of 81%. Nurse Smith has helped to make the flu shot clinic very successful, mitigating the spread of further viruses. Nurse Smith is very well-respected by the Administration, his co-workers, and inmates and has made an unforgettable difference during this pandemic.



HOU – Lori Veihdeffer | Infectious Control Nurse

Lori has gone above and beyond to ensure that the facility is on top of handling the pandemic. She has created various spread sheets to track the inmates being tested, coordinating staff testing and ensuring staff as well as inmates are aware of their results. Inmates are COVID19 tested for various reasons and Lori has been able to ensure that we capture all the data that is needed. She has been on point for 10 plus months now and ensures that the medical staff, unit teams and administrative team are kept up to date regarding the inmates and their needs. She comes in early, stays late, and has worked from home on many weekends calling staff with their results. Lori is doing everything she can do to keep our staff home that need to be home and get those staff back to work that can come back to work. She has continued to be the leader in the state for ensuring that the HCV program continues and Houtzdale has been able to pick up for other facilities that were not able to get enough inmates prepped and ready to start HCV treatment. She has also taken on

additional duties of the psychiatric nurse as this staff member is out on WRIL. Lori never complains that it is too much work or that she can't get it done she always finds a way to accomplish the task at hand. She is an invaluable member of the medical department and her efforts are definitely appreciated by those that work with her day in and day out.

LAU – Jennifer Schrock | Corrections Health Care Administrator

CHCA Jennifer Schrock's performance has been instrumental in addressing the pandemic at SCI Laurel Highlands. Immediately upon the onset of the pandemic, CHCA Schrock met with administrative staff to develop a comprehensive plan for the facility. This plan incorporated two subdivisions as SCI Laurel Highlands houses over 300 inmates with medical conditions that significantly increased their vulnerability to the coronavirus. She also had to address having over 1000 general population inmates and maintaining services to those inmates. CHCA Schrock determined that the medical housing units would immediately be placed on quarantine with no general population inmates being permitted in this area. She also developed a staffing plan to minimize overlap with employees in these areas. She re-designated beds to allow inmate porters to be housed on the medical units permanently to maintain services on these units.



Through these mitigation efforts, the facility was able to maintain a lengthy period with no positive cases. Unfortunately, with the drastic increase of positive cases state-wide, this virus did find its way inside. CHCA Schrock quickly developed isolation areas and instituted a testing plan for the medically vulnerable inmates that aided in identifying those positive cases and implement medical treatment plans. CHCA Schrock worked diligently with local hospitals to meet treatment objectives determined by the medical providers. This quick action had a significant impact on reducing the number of deaths from this highly vulnerable population. In addition, as general population inmates began displaying symptoms and testing positive, she coordinated a plan to quarantine and isolate those inmates. This

was an extremely difficult task as the majority of the housing units at this facility are open dorm housing.

CHCA Schrock also had to handle significant staff shortages in the medical department as staff were unable to work due to protocols. Despite these shortages, no treatment needs were unmet as she addressed this issue and was able to get

those staff who could work to volunteer to assist the facility. CHCA Schrock has basically worked around the clock and has been available regardless of the day or time that an issue needed addressed. CHCA Schrock has also been able to have over 1,000 staff tests completed. Many of these tests were conducted in the parking lot to minimize entry into the facility until testing was completed. Her dedication to combat and then treat this virus has been the stabilizing force for this facility. Both the staff and inmates have benefited from her efforts.

INSTITUTIONAL SAFETY

BEN – Michael Bell | Correctional Institutional Safety Manager

Mr. Bell has consistently demonstrated extraordinary performance and initiative in his duties during the COVID-19 pandemic. His efforts, partnered with the collective cooperation from staff and inmates at SCI Benner Township have been imperative in mitigating the spread of the COVID-19 virus at this facility.

Mr. Bell has been flexible in his thinking and response to utilize areas within the facility that are not normally used for inmate housing to meet the demands for quarantine and isolation areas. He has also assisted in completing contact tracing, using that information to respond almost immediately, no matter the hour, to coordinate the sanitation of identified areas.

Mr. Bell has also personally trained staff and inmate janitors in proper application of chemical cleaning agents on housing units to include dwell time and safe usage of the products provided. He has implemented signage throughout the institution, reminding staff and inmates to adhere to all CDC guidelines. Additionally, Mr. Bell has ownership for PPE inventories and he has ensured that inventory levels are enough to meet the need in all areas.

An ounce of prevention truly is worth a pound of cure and during this pandemic – Mr. Bell's efforts have been instrumental in managing the COVID-19 pandemic at SCI Benner Township.

WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS

MUN – Wesley Persun | Corrections Stock Clerk | Warehouse Supervisor

While the daily operations of a facility can be taxing, the challenges presented in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic led to an increased need for organization, multi-tasking and “out of the box” thinking to continue to ensure for the basic needs within the facility. At SCI Muncy, one of the key factors to the institution's ability to provide this care was that of Mr. Persun. He is the persona of professionalism, consistently leading by example and an ongoing reminder of how far a smile and a kind word can go.

During this pandemic, Mr. Persun, has worked tirelessly and without complaint to ensure that the institution, and every department within, had what was needed to accomplish the mission at hand. Whether it was feeding the masses, obtaining cleaning chemicals and fixtures, finding new vendors, ensuring a “stockpile” of personal hygiene items was readily available, or making those “emergency” deliveries with little notice; there was never any doubt that Mr. Persun, and his dedicated warehouse staff, would get it done.

COVID has presented challenges... at times that have seemed insurmountable.... but it is staff like Mr. Persun that make it appear “easy” and his work is done without expectation of praise or acknowledgement. He is the true epitome of a dedicated DOC staff member and SCI Muncy is proud that he is a member of their team.



SECURITY

WAM – Dennis Cush | Critical Incident Manager

Lt. Dush has consistently demonstrated dedication and resilience during this pandemic. He has worked in the command post for endless hours and days maintaining, tracking, and monitoring COVID testing results for both staff and inmates during this pandemic. His record keeping is vital in assisting the Administrative team in decision making responsibilities

related to COVID. He also ensures COVID supplies are managed and issued when needed. He is the heart beat between the command post, the facility control center, and the Executive Staff; ensuring that communication is occurring to all affected stakeholders in the management of this pandemic. During his off-duty hours, he is always monitoring and answering phone calls to ensure SCI Waymart continues to complete its mission. Lt. Cush is an asset to the DOC and a valuable member of the SCI Waymart team.

MER – John Oliver | Captain

Captain John Oliver has helped several facilities during the pandemic. John was a long-time Critical Incident Management lieutenant at SCI Cambridge Springs before promoting to Captain at SCI Mercer. He was called upon during the early onset of COVID 19 in the Department and was deployed to SCI Huntingdon. Since that time, he has been deployed to SCIs Waymart, Chester, Dallas, and Muncy. His expertise in emergency preparedness has been an asset during these times. He has assisted in the command posts, has created tracking documentation, and has been serving as a member of a strike team to assist with mass testing

ALB – William Harmon | Critical Incident Manager

In the beginning, Lt. William Harmon pioneered the set-up of our “mass casualty” quarantine area. This was designed and constructed in the SCI-Albion inmate gymnasium. He provided staff training on the expected procedures and decontamination should the need arise. Lt. Harmon works constantly at contact tracing. This includes hours outside of his normal duty schedule, to include weekends and holidays. He has also been known to drive to the facility to ensure the proper handling of enhanced quarantines, when needed. He has also gone as far as to travel to staff members homes to provide them necessary documentation/paperwork to help get them back to work.

MAH – Ryan Reese | Acting Critical Incident Manager

Lt. Reese has been instrumental to SCI Mahanoy throughout the COVID pandemic. From Day 1, he has immersed himself in the demands and challenges that COVID-19 has brought upon all of us. From learning about the virus, informing staff, obtaining and distributing PPE, enforcing social distance protocols, tracking staff and following up with cleaning, disinfecting and sanitizing areas- he has done it all. Lt. Reese has developed his own COVID tracking spreadsheet to monitor all staff COVID related absences and assists in updating it daily to help manage staff shortages.

Lt. Reese has recently been appointed to Acting Critical Incident Manager (CIM) and during most of this pandemic, was assigned as Alternate CIM. With all the responsibilities and duties of both positions, Lt. Reese has never faltered in providing security oversight and supervision of his assigned zones; which include Medical, Property, Laundry and CI. Throughout this very difficult time and with overwhelming demands, Lt. Reese has kept a pleasant demeanor and has done his job with no complaint. He is truly a staff member to be recognized and SCI Mahanoy is lucky to have him.

SMR – Jason Washabaugh | Critical Incident Manager

Since this pandemic started Lt. Jason Washabaugh has been at the tip of the spear in operational planning and operations at SCI Somerset. Jason was instrumental in ensuring masks were quickly made available to both staff and inmates at this facility. He also collaborated with Somerset County EMA and Correctional Industries and had masks made for the Somerset County 911 staff and the county jail. This quick intervention was critical and allowed for operations at both facilities to continue with little interruptions. He has worked directly alongside medical staff to ensure that tracking was in place for all staff and inmates who were being tested and he helped establish facility isolation and quarantine protocols. Jason's tracking format was so successful that it was adopted and put into place department wide. We have had up to 120 staff out COVID-19 related and over 300 inmates infected with virus. The tracking to ensure that staff remain out until cleared and inmates remain in isolation or quarantine for the appropriate timeframe has been critical in slowing down the spread of this virus at this facility.

MER – Shawn Lacich | Sergeant

On a Saturday morning, a Dietary inmate tested positive and all inmate workers needed to be sent back to their housing units for the area to be disinfected. Because of the time of day, Dietary staff were struggling to get out the inmate meals. Sgt. Lacich called a local pizza shop, ordered, and paid for pizzas to be delivered for all staff working that day so Dietary didn't have to worry about preparing food for staff as well.

MUN – Bryan Boyer | Shift Commander

At a facility, when an emergency arises, there is always at least one "go to" person who steps up and goes above and beyond in taking charge and providing emergency procedure recommendations. At SCI Muncy, as well as for the DOC and the Commonwealth, one of those "go to" people is Captain Boyer. For those who have had the privilege of working with Captain Boyer, you quickly embrace his strengths relative to Emergency Management and the Incident Command

System (ICS). Captain Boyer has tirelessly demonstrated his commitment to the DOC as well as the Commonwealth, working in support of the Commonwealth at the EOC and in support of other facilities as a medical strike team member during COVID. His perseverance, contagious “we can do this” attitude and his ability to strategically develop, organize and execute a plan helps to ensure the safety and needs of all.

PNG – Timothy Diehl | Sergeant

Sgt Diehl worked in high risk units during the outbreak at SCI Pine Grove. He regularly works the quarantine unit designated for transfers and ATA returns. He contracted COVID while working on those housing units. Despite being symptomatic, he continues to have a positive attitude with both staff and inmates. Tim and his family also supplied staff at SCI Pine Grove with masks during the early part of COVID without charge. He truly exemplifies the spirit of a lead worker.

DAL – Michael Sankey | Sergeant

Logistical coordination is imperative to the management of COVID-19 inside a correctional facility, but communication and transparency with staff and inmates and consistent education are equally parallel in importance. Sgt. Sankey has been instrumental in assisting with that communication and education at SCI Dallas. Through his calm and straight-forwarded approach, he has rallied staff and inmates to engage in basic COVID precautions for mask wearing, exercising social distancing to the greatest extent possible and practicing basic hygiene that includes personal hygiene efforts as simple as handwashing and extends to complete and expansive sanitation efforts throughout the facility.

SCI Dallas has not been immune to the impact of COVID-19 and the challenges that are encountered in the management of this pandemic. The facility has experienced staffing issues never encountered in the history of this agency, ongoing testing initiatives, depopulation efforts and the loss of lives that has impacted staff, inmates and their families. Sgt. Sankey has demonstrated exceptional leadership in assisting the staff and inmates at SCI Dallas to work collectively to hurdle these challenges.

When receipt of testing results requires the movement of inmates to the appropriate housing locations, Sgt. Sankey has remained committed to keep his “boots on the ground” to assist in these moves so that they were completed safely and securely. He has never hesitated to take on the challenge to assist with the logistical movements to the gymnasium, which serves as an infirmary annex, and has taken the time to speak to the inmates to answer their questions and ease some of their concerns. He has held to his personal commitment to routinely check on the inmates housed in the annex

to ensure their immediate needs are met. His efforts have not gone unnoticed by the inmate population and the gymnasium has become known as "Sankey Zone". The staff at SCI Dallas have worked tirelessly to minimize the impact of COVID and Sgt. Sankey epitomizes the commitment, dedication and perseverance demonstrated by the staff at SCI Dallas daily.

HOU -Edward Miller | Captain

Captain Miller has always gone above and beyond while performing his duties. This year specifically he has managed to not lose sight of the everyday task of managing an entire shift, but in the meantime, he has displayed an outstanding ability to pay close attention to daily changes brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. There have been many times where he has identified issues that may arise from a rapidly evolving environment and its procedural changes, giving the administrative team the ability to head them off prior to them actually happening. The recent changes in the correctional setting have produced significant challenges for a shift commander. This captain has been able to consistently foster an overall positive attitude, which has made the difference among his peers and those that he has daily contact with. Captain Miller projects strong leadership ability and always conducts himself in a professional manner. He has assisted all shifts with maintaining rosters when staff compliments have reduced and overtime issues presented additional complications. He has consistently volunteered to work many additional shifts when needed for coverage. Captain Miller continues to be an anchor point for anyone in the facility with questions pertaining to facility operations, he is knowledgeable and willing to take the time to explain procedures to those in need of understanding. This individual not only has kept up with the overall fast pace of this environment, but has displayed that he truly cares about ensuring this facility operates as it should and all staff are confident in his leadership ability.

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT

HUN – Seth Morrison | Facility Maintenance Manager, Jared Sunderland & Kenneth Holmes| Corrections Maintenance Foreman

The viability of the physical plant is imperative to safety and security in any correctional facility. The feat of maintaining corrective and preventative maintenance in the Maintenance Department at SCI Huntingdon, a facility that is 131 years old, is a monumental task; completing that work with excellence is what SCI Huntingdon does routinely. During the COVID-19 outbreak at SCI Huntingdon in April 2020, the facility Maintenance Department was tasked with conversion of multiple areas inside that facility for use as infirmary annexes. In addition, this Maintenance Department was also tasked with

reopening their outside housing unit for use by other state and county facilities. In typical SCI Huntingdon fashion, they saw each objective through and in the Fall of 2020, this same Maintenance Department was called upon to assist multiple



facilities in the erection of medical infirmary annexes; one of these facilities was SCI Chester. SCI Chester was experiencing critical staffing shortages in their facility Maintenance Department and they had an urgent need to erect an annex in their gymnasium to meet the medical needs of their inmate population.

SCI Huntingdon once again responded and on November 4, 2020, Facility Maintenance Manager Seth Morrison and Corrections Maintenance Foremen Jared Sunderland and Kenneth Holmes deployed to SCI Chester to assist in building their infirmary annex for use as a COVID isolation housing unit. In a period of 3 days they completed their task. The level of commitment and dedication demonstrated by these staff members is reflective of the level of teamwork that is consistently demonstrated by the staff at SCI Huntingdon and

the Department of Corrections, an agency that operates as “One Team.”

RET – Timothy Telesky | Electronic Trades Instructor

SCI Retreat was closed on June 27, 2020. Although general surplus efforts have been initiated at the facility, the facility is being maintained in the event that it must be reactivated due to COVID -19. The task of processing the surplus inventory for this facility is monumental, ensuring the facility remains viable for potential reactivation is equally challenging.

The staff who have volunteered to remain at SCI Retreat are dedicated to their mission and have worked collectively to meet their objectives. Electronics Trades Instructor Timothy Telesky is one of the staff members who remains assigned to SCI Retreat. Mr. Telesky routinely conducts corrective and preventative maintenance for the institution's security, fire safety and communication systems. He consistently makes himself available to address issues that may arise and he does not hesitate to work alongside other staff in preparing items at the facility for surplus. Mr. Telesky has exemplary leadership and organization skills and he is often relied upon to maintain the continuity of maintenance projects to ensure the mission at SCI Retreat remains uninterrupted.

Mr. Telesky has tirelessly demonstrated professionalism, commitment and flexibility throughout the closure process at SCI Retreat.

PSYCHOLOGY

MER – Shelby Miller | Psychological Service Specialist

PSS Shelby Miller was the only staff member working in the Psychology Department at SCI Mercer for weeks after COVID absences devastated the department. She took the initiative to immediately assess and identify the essential tasks which needed to be accomplished. She completed PCRA's ahead of the deadline ensuring there would be no disruption to the parole process. Shelby has ensured daily rounds have been made on her assigned housing units, has provided the inmates with crossword puzzles and a variety of other activities to assist with keeping their minds busy while in their cells. She is also the HNT Coordinator for SCI Mercer, and has worked many evenings and weekends making rounds on the housing units talking to and providing support to the inmate population. She has also participated in "fireside chats" to talk about coping skills.

FOOD SERVICE

QUE – Donald Yontosh | Food Service Supervisor & Tobias Bickle |
Food Service Instructor

During May 2020, CFSS Yontosh and CFSI Bickle volunteered to assist SCI Huntingdon amid the critical situation the institution was experiencing. Both Mr. Yontosh and Mr. Bickle spent four weeks at SCI Huntingdon, working 16-hour shifts to ensure its food service program remained on schedule. Mr. Yontosh and Mr. Bickle put their "normal" daily-life aside and volunteered for this temporary assignment. In both instances, the aforementioned staff understood the importance of the task, while rising to the occasion when SCI Huntingdon was in need. These efforts are viewed as nothing short of exemplary.



ROC – Joseph Weaver | Corrections Food Service Manager

Mr. Joseph Weaver has demonstrated exemplary leadership throughout his tenure with the Department of Corrections and that has not faltered during the COVID pandemic. COVID 19 has brought about significant modifications to many aspects of daily facility operations, but the requirement to provide three (3) meals a day to approximately 1,600 inmates and meal service to staff has remained a constant.

His out-of-the box thought processes have proven critical in the transition to a hybrid food service operation, that includes a combination of on-unit meal delivery and tray pick-up services to ensure for social distancing and to mitigate the potential for community spread of COVID-19. The Food Service Department at SCI Rockview has been impacted by critical staffing shortages multiple times during COVID, but under Mr. Weaver's leadership and with the assistance from staff across the facility, this department has continued to meet the needs of staff and inmates alike. Mr. Weaver and the dedicated staff of the Food Service Department continue to maintain flexibility and never complain about the hurdles they encounter daily and they accomplish their work with pride and ongoing commitment.

FRS – Robert Barnes | Central Region Food Contract Liaison

At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak at SCI Huntingdon in April of 2020, staffing in the Food Service Department at that facility was heavily impacted with COVID related staff absences, to include the absence of their Food Service Manager and two (2) Food Service Supervisors. Robert Barnes was a Food Service Manager at SCI Forest at the time. On April 27, 2020 he was called upon to see if he was available to deploy to SCI Huntingdon to assist with their food service operations. Without hesitation, Mr. Barnes packed his bags and checked into a local hotel that same afternoon. The next day, he reported to SCI Huntingdon and went straight to work. He was not alone in his responsiveness as he was joined by staff who deployed to SCI Huntingdon from the Quehanna Motivational Boot Camp, SCI Forest and SCI Houtzdale.



On his arrival, he was welcomed by the Food Service staff at SCI Huntingdon who were working tirelessly to sustain their operation. When the inmate workforce was removed from the kitchen as a mitigation strategy, Corrections Officers worked alongside Food Service Department staff to assist in the daily preparation of meals. In the 46 days Mr. Barnes was deployed to SCI Huntingdon, he was also tasked with assisting with the transition of the upstairs Food Service storage location into an infirmary annex; this feat included moving all the dry storage food to shipping containers, integrating daily snack bags for distribution to the inmate population and working collectively with Huntingdon staff to find solutions to expediate meal deliveries to the housing units.

Mr. Barnes was instrumental in ensuring that Food Service operations were sustained at SCI Huntingdon. He exemplifies commitment and professionalism in the Department of Corrections.

UNIT MANAGEMENT

SMR – Courtney Pasquale | Unit Manager

Through her outside the box thinking, Courtney developed a strategy to break each facility into distinctive zones. Her zoning concept was designed to prevent the spread of this virus by containing any outbreak into one zone. Through cohorting, activity levels at each facility could be increased or decreased based on the size of cohorting that is deemed appropriate. Courtney has assisted several facilities navigate the zoning and cohort concepts. She has spent countless hours developing strategies and procedures that are easy to understand and adaptable to any situation. This zoning concept has been a keystone in our mitigation protocols and has been highlighted as a Best Practice in correctional operations around the country.

PNG – Amy Mottin | Corrections Counselor

CC Amy Mottin has gone above and beyond in her regular duties as well as a member of the regional HNT. Amy is someone that quietly goes about her job on a daily basis however, she can always be counted on in times of struggle. She and the Activities Manager



stepped up when we implemented the zoom visits early in the COVID pandemic. She has deployed for Regional HNT on multiple occasions during the pandemic, to include deployments to other state and county correctional facilities. She was recognized during the Cambria county activation where she actively negotiated the surrender of inmates holding a housing unit. She has been asked several times to work out of class as a Unit Manager where she worked seamlessly to meet our institutional goals. Corrections Counselor Amy Mottin is a true asset to SCI Pine Grove and the Department of Corrections.

CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES

GRN – Kristy Santoyo | Garment Factory Supervisor

Ms. Santoyo has single handedly been coordinating the running of the CI Shop due to the retirement of coworkers from SCI Greene. Her proactive approach to duty, personal motivation, and commitment to doing her job correctly has been recognized and applauded throughout the Department. During a pandemic and when PPE's were in high demand, the CI Shop at SCI Greene was tasked with producing face masks not only for the DOC, but other state agencies. The CI shop surpassed 100,000 masks produced on May 14, 2020 under her supervision. This production occurred under challenging circumstances, including a limited inmate work force and the need to ensure social distancing and cohort integrity was maintained in the shop.

Her knowledge and understanding in the field of CI are both noteworthy and valued and her commitment to duty, especially during this COVID pandemic has directly benefited the institution, DOC and the Commonwealth.



PAROLE FIELD SERVICES

In the beginning of March 2020 Parole Field Services was in the midst of change with the mobile office initiative kicking into high gear to be implemented statewide, procedural updates and changes were being made, functions and processes were being fully merged with DOC to create the unified DOC/Parole structure which brought more efficiencies and effectiveness to reentry work, as parole field services continued to battle the social struggles of our time such as homelessness, violence in our urban areas, poverty, mental health, and drug addiction. By the end of March 2020, the world froze and parole supervision needed to readjust to ensure safety in the community for both staff and citizens while also working to mitigate the spread of COVID 19. Office staff were equipped to work remotely, supervision requirements were altered to include use of facetime, Zoom, Skype for meetings with staff and reentrants. Reentrants were furloughed from SCIs and Community Correction Centers to reduce congregate living populations. Personal protective equipment and electronic devices were distributed throughout the commonwealth. Simultaneously the communities saw an increase in violence, civil unrest, drug use, reduced programming capabilities for mental health, substance use disorder, unemployment rates increased, and there were shortages in food pantries, shelters, and other social programs. Parole Field Services persevered through all of this due to the commitment and determination of staff who's work ethic, selflessness, versatility, and humanity is unmatched as evidenced by their stories.

ADDRESSING SOCIAL NEEDS

Parole Agent Pietrasiewicz from Erie District found her new release to need basic supplies and food. When the community social program was unable to meet these needs, Agent Pietrasiewicz took the reentrant to Dollar General and purchased all immediate needed items for the reentrant.

Agents Melissa Nelson, Brittney Cranmer, and Community Resource Agent Tyrone Lacy out of Chester District, organized a food drive to support families in need. 1600 pounds of food was collected and donated.

Agent Donielle Martin assigned to the Chester District taught herself to make face masks after receiving her DOC issued mask made in the institution. Due to the significant mask shortage at the time she donated the handmade masks to essential workers at Einstein Hospital.



ADDRESSING STAFF NEEDS

The Parole Field Training Agents across the Commonwealth worked diligently to ensure that all staff were trained to use their technological devices, they provided trouble shooting assistance, developed forms and processes to create efficiencies for the new remote work environment.

The Parole Field Training Agents worked in conjunction with the Training Academy to develop a virtual training academy for new cadets so that parole could maintain its agent complement, which is regularly depleted due to retirements and resignations.

The Field Tactical Training Division and the Field Training Agents transported needed PPE supplies and electronic devices throughout the state to ensure offices had supplies such as masks, sanitizer, and cleaning supplies.

Statewide, parole agents have volunteered to cover cases, duty days, and other office duties to cover for agents out on quarantine or assist the clerical due to reduced staff working in the office. Agents have continued to work together and assist each other throughout this pandemic, which has allowed field services to consistently maintain operations in the field. Staff supported one another throughout their quarantines by regularly checking in with COVID-19 positive staff and dropping off food and supplies at their door steps. COVID 19 has shown us all that we truly have each other's support in times of need, both personally and professionally. An example of this support is Supervisor Kent Jones out of the Greensburg Sub Office, dropping off supplies to an Agent's home, who was sick with COVID 19 in early December. The Agent did not ask for help, but Supervisor Jones wanted to do something to aid in the Agent's recovery and show his support.

At the beginning of this pandemic when supplies were limited, Agent Jacob Wishart out of Mercer District distributed masks to staff which were made by his mother.

NOTABLE VACCINATION EFFORTS

Allentown Deputy District Director Todd Clark researched vaccination options available for his staff and reentrants. Deputy Clark shared this information with his staff and encouraged them to get vaccinated, even assisting them with registration.

Agent Karen See worked with UPMC EMS Specialists and Oil City Police Department and was able to get Franklin Sub Office staff included in first round of vaccinations for first responders. About half the office took advantage of this opportunity.

Pittsburgh District Director Brian Helfrich is partnering with the VA Chief of Police to get staff who are veterans vaccinated. Director Helfrich is also in communications with independent pharmacies working to get all staff vaccinated.

INCREASED VIOLENCE AND CIVIL UNREST:

Parole field services has partnered with local law enforcement in major cities and with federal task forces to combat increased violence. Throughout 2020 we saw an increase in civil unrest and violence in Philadelphia and Harrisburg. Parole has partnered with both Philadelphia Police Department and Harrisburg Police Department to work collaboratively by sharing information, intelligence, and resources. An Agent has been embedded in both Police Departments to focus solely on this collaboration. Parole is in the process of finalizing a partnership with ATF, DEA, and FBI task forces aimed at reducing violent crime in Pennsylvania. The goal is to partner with the federal task forces in the same capacity as the city police departments.

