

FRONTLINE NEWS

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Photo credit: Darby Baham

D.C. Jail Hosts 1st Open House

On April 23, the D.C. Jail opened its doors to the public while hosting its first Open House and Community Meet and Greet. The event, which began at 10am on Saturday lasted until 4pm and featured various information tables on programs and services offered in the jail, human resources, officer training, contraband awareness, the honor guard and agency Vision Team. It also showcased some of the Department's partner agencies, including Unity Healthcare, DC Public Library (DCPL), and the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH).

"We were really excited to host such a groundbreaking event," said Director Tom Faust. "You don't normally hear of corrections facilities opening their doors to the public, but we want to continue to be transparent with the surrounding community and ensure everyone is aware of what we are doing at the jail."

One very popular aspect of the Open House were the jail tours offered, which had over 100 participants. The tours included a look at the library program, medical, visitation, the Inmate Reception Center, and more.

"The Open House was a major success, especially considering the inclement weather. It shows that the community is interested, so we will certainly have more in the future," said Director Faust.

By Darby Baham

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- Director Faust



Honor Guard Wins Annual Competition at Wreath Laying Ceremony



Photo credit: Bridget Reavis-Tyler

Closing out this year's National Correctional Employees Week, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Corrections Chiefs Committee hosted the 25th Annual Wreath Laying Ceremony on May 7 at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial.

The ceremony, which is held yearly to honor those officers who have fallen, included a roll call of the names of the fallen heroes as a single rose was placed in each person's honor.

At the conclusion of the wreath laying ceremony, the annual Honor Guard Competition took place, with six honor guard units participating in the drill competition. This year, and after featuring their new uniforms, the DCDOC Honor Guard went home with the 1st place distinction — an award they haven't won since 2012, says

Officer Glennard Walker.

"I am extremely proud of the hard work and team effort the Honor Guard exhibited," said Warden William Smith. "They exemplified the team work and professionalism required to bring home the gold."

Following the ceremony and competition, participants had the opportunity to see former Deputy Director Carolyn A. Cross' name, which was added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial this year. The actual memorial service took place the next week on Friday, May 13.

By Darby Baham

DOC Celebrates Cinco de Mayo with Latino Inmates

As part of DOC's goal to increase recreational activities at the D.C. Jail, Hispanic population inmates were afforded the opportunity to celebrate Cinco de Mayo for the first time in the jail on May 5, 2016.

Included in the activities were a game of bingo; presentations about the history of the holiday from various volunteers; special snacks of guacamole, chips, and salsa; and a fútbol tournament.

"It was very important [that we did this program] so they could learn about one of the biggest populations in the USA — Mexicans — and they could also share stories about their own cultures," said Private Cornejo. "I know a lot of the inmates said it helped them feel the jail was more respectful of their culture."



Photo credit: Darby Baham

Private Cornejo was one of several officers and volunteers who helped the day run smoothly and were available to answer questions from the inmates, as well as serve as potential bi-lingual interpreters. After the presentations were held in the chapel, the fan favorite activity of the day took place: the fútbol tournament, which included 4 teams of seven persons each.

"We plan to do more activities like this in the future," said Private Cornejo. "Sgt. Kinsey has already talked about trying to do something similar in September when Honduras and El Salvador celebrate their independence."

Getting to Know Gloria Robertson

Gloria Robertson currently serves as the Audit and Compliance Manager. She is an experienced corrections professional, having held senior level positions with public safety and correctional health care organizations including the DCDOC, Center for Correctional Health and Policy Studies, and the Court Appointed Receiver for DCDOC.

Prior to assuming the role of Audit and Compliance Manager, for more than seven years, Ms. Robertson held positions as Quality Assurance /Health Systems Specialist and Quality Improvement Coordinator with the Department. In these roles she was responsible for conducting quality assurance audits, quality improvement assessments and comprehensive reviews of correctional health care policies and procedures—to ensure adherence to American Correctional Association (ACA) and National Commission on Correctional Health (NCCHC) standards and District of Columbia regulations.

Ms. Robertson has also held professional positions with DCDOC as a Staff Nurse/ Liaison providing critical health care support to inmates housed within the District's correctional system.

Profile: Gloria Robertson

Gloria Robertson joined DCDOC as an employee in 2006 (after working as a contractor for several years previously) and worked in health services monitoring the medical contractor until 2013 when she became the Audit and Compliance Manager. Please read below to learn more about Gloria Robertson.



Q: What are you most proud of as Audit & Compliance Manager?

A: I am most proud of the fact that the agency invested in the program. Under the leadership of Director Faust, I have the full support of everyone in the agency. I am proud that our DOC team walked away with its second reaccreditation in January 2016. I enjoy auditing and appreciate the fact I am given the needed support to inspect the facility without barriers. It gives us an opportunity to look at our operations for areas of improvement and possibly enhance those things that are working well.

Q: What are some of your short and long term goals looking forward?

A: Short term goals:

To overhaul the current ACA file system
Meet with managers to discuss ACA documentation

Long term goals:

Create a comprehensive audit tool which will allow staff members to conduct an audit of any area within the CDF
Achieve 100% compliance during our next reaccreditation which is scheduled for 2018.

Q: What do you enjoy the most about working at DCDOC?

A: I truly enjoy working with people who open themselves up and share the knowledge gained from their experience and diversity. I have learned so much about our profession, and about people in general, by working in this environment. I love the broad scope of responsibilities and opportunities that the agency offers because that allows us to learn and grow personally and professionally. I have immense respect for our uniformed staff. They are hard working professionals who put themselves in harm's way each time they step inside the facility. They protect you, me, the inmates, and the public.

Q: Tell us a bit about yourself—some of your hobbies and interests.

A: My first love is music, mostly oldies/classics whether it be Hip hop, soft rock, R&B, or country. The best music was made in the seventies. I love tennis. I love to take to the courts, and some year will treat myself to the US Open. Roger Federer and Serena Williams are my favorite players.

DOC Opens Mental Health Step Down Unit

After months of planning, the D.C. Jail's first Step Down Unit (SDU) opened its doors on May 2, 2016. The therapeutic mental health unit, which features a 9 week tiered program to support inmates' improved independent functioning, is expected to better prepare the patients for reintegration into the community and/or general population. Inmates on this unit have come from the acute Mental Health Unit where they have been stabilized on medications prior to their voluntarily being transferred to the SDU.

"One step into the unit, and you know you're not in a typical jail housing unit," said Dr. Beth Mynett, Medical Director and Health Services Administrator. "We wanted the richer and more comprehensive programmatic offerings to be reflected visually in the way the unit looks, starting with the very first step an inmate makes into this therapeutic community. There are calming cloud covers over fluorescent lighting as well as banners around the unit featuring inspirational quotes chosen by the medical and custody staff on the unit. As transformative as the environment is, we think this unit is really groundbreaking because it provides richer programs for the inmates to participate in to help improve their functionality so they can better and more safely navigate the jail as well as their communities upon discharge. New programming features group therapy, anger management, trauma-informed care counselling, chess club, art therapy and mindfulness training. We are also working closely with the Department of Behavioral Health to help assure a strong connection to community services."

By Darby Baham

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Officer Dining Room Gets Grand Re-Opening Ceremony

"Today, we get something that's for staff and staff only," said Lieutenant Armstrong as he began introductions for the Officer Dining Room re-opening ceremony. "The Vision Team, we took your suggestions and concerns and presented them to the executive staff, and they listened."

The ceremony, which was held May 18 at 10am in the Roll Call Room started with brief remarks from Warden Smith and Director Faust about the importance of the re-opening and other future improvements coming for staff. However, after reminding staff about where they'd come from just a couple months prior, Director Faust quickly moved into what everyone was waiting to see — the first look.

The crowd moved from the packed Roll Call Room to the hallway as the official ribbon cutting occurred, and then with one fell swoop of the red ribbon to the ground, rushed in with faces of excitement and happiness as they noticed the new enhancements.

A crowd favorite were the new couches in both the recreational room and at the opening of the dining room, but other features were just as pleasing to those in attendance, such as the new refrigerators, the booths, the coming pool table, and the overall aesthetics of the cafeteria. "This is about staff and making your work environment better," said Director Faust to the ceremony audience. "I think it's come together beautifully, and there will be more things coming up recognizing what you do every day in this agency."



Photo credit: Bridget Reavis-Tyler