

# NEWS RELEASE

## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

### Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

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Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations

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## Department of Correction officers recognized for exceptional service during 2020

**Dover, DE** – Department of Correction Commissioner Claire DeMatteis today announced that nearly a dozen DOC correctional officers and probation officers are being recognized with annual Departmental awards for providing service above and beyond the call of duty during 2020. The award winners will be presented with their awards during a ceremony in early May.

"During the COVID-19 pandemic we have asked our staff to dig deeper, and they have, day in and day out," **Commissioner Claire DeMatteis said.** "Our officers and professional staff continue to exceed expectations to serve, protect the community and provide reentry services to offenders. Today I am honored to recognize 11 incredible members of our DOC team with departmental awards, and I could not be more proud every day of the excellence, grit and determination exhibited by all the men and women of the Delaware Department of Correction."

DOC employees who are being recognized with annual awards are as follows:

### **2020 Commissioner's Award for Heroism: Chris Rains, Senior Probation & Parole Officer, John Moyer, Senior Probation & Parole Officer, New Castle County**

On the evening of November 4, 2020, while completing their shift of probationer visits in the community, Senior Probation Officers Rains and Moyer came upon the scene of what appeared to be a vehicle fire on Route 9 in New Castle. An assessment revealed two young children in the vehicle and evidence that the vehicle accident occurred after the vehicle was struck by gunfire which seriously injured an infant child inside the vehicle. As first responders to the scene, Officers Rains and Moyer called for police and medical assistance, rendered medical assistance to the injured child until the paramedics arrived, and provided crowd control.

### **2020 Employee of the Year: Heidi Collier, Classification & Special Programs Director, Bureau of Prisons**

Over the past year the DOC has worked diligently to return 300 inmates who were temporarily housed in Pennsylvania back to Delaware. Director Collier led that mission, which was made more challenging by COVID-related precautions taken by both states. Director Collier

successfully coordinated the safe return of the inmates which included constant communication with Pennsylvania authorities, close collaboration with Wardens and planning coordination with DOC healthcare staff, the completion of hundreds of classification reviews, and ensuring that complex transportation arrangements were developed and carried out. COVID-19 initially halted inmate transfers, which were resumed after Director Collier established safety protocols, including additional testing and quarantine measures. Director Collier is a 16-year DOC veteran who started her DOC career as a Correctional Officer and a Probation Officer before later being promoted to Director of Classification and Special Programs.

### **2020 Correctional Officer of the Year: Lieutenant Brian Vanes, Howard R. Young Correctional Institution (HRYCI)**

Lieutenant Vanes is responsible for a variety of mission-critical facility roles, including all administrative and criminal investigations which he completes thoroughly and diligently. Through this role Lt. Vanes routinely collaborates with law enforcement partners. Over the past year this collaboration included coordinating HRYCI support for one dozen Delaware State Police "crime blitz" quality of life crime prevention operations which made 500 arrests and seized illegal guns and drugs, and providing substantial assistance in support of investigations of an armed robbery and violent assault in the community which led to multiple arrests.

Lt. Vanes serves as the Department of Justice liaison, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) compliance manager, and the American Correctional Association (ACA) Compliance Manager for HRYCI in which he is responsible for ensuring that the facility continually meets 383 separate standards; during the 2020 ACA reaccreditation audit, HRYCI scored a 99% compliance rating. In addition, Lt. Vanes has supported HRYCI's COVID response by developing and implementing procedures to track all facility COVID cases by housing location to support ongoing prevention and mitigation efforts.

### **2020 Probation & Parole Officer of the Year: Dawn Stevens, Sussex County Senior Probation & Parole Officer**

Senior Probation Officer Stevens demonstrated uncommon commitment, teamwork, and leadership over the past year that underscores the unique role of a probation officer, including risking her life to save others, taking violent offenders off the street, volunteering her time and effort to give back to the community and strengthening DOC's relationship with the community, creating time to train and mentor other officers, and stepping up in a leadership role.

Following are selected examples of her exceptional service over the past year. Officer Stevens managed Sussex County operations for DOC's Operation ZiPP Up winter clothing collection drive over the past two years, coordinating with partner organizations to distribute hundreds of items to residents in need. Her careful probation supervision of a violent offender revealed continued criminal behavior, triggering prosecution and a significant sentence for new drug and weapons charges. She was awarded the commendation for Valor for heroic actions after she used her training and experience to create and administer an improvised tourniquet that helped save the life of an injured motorist, even as the victim's vehicle erupted in flames just

feet away. She was awarded the meritorious service award for overcoming COVID-19 challenges by organizing and conducting on-site training for Probation Officer Cadets in Sussex County, continuing a role she has held for the past five years. In addition, on her own time she engaged with community resources to provide food, housing, and support to a former probationer she encountered in the community who faced homelessness and other significant needs as a result of COVID-19.

Additionally, Senior Probation Officer Stevens was nominated by Commissioner DeMatteis for the State Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service.

**2020 Team of the Year: Samuel Ford, Probation & Parole Officer Supervisor, Loren Sullivan, Probation & Parole Officer Supervisor, Amy Shannon, Senior Probation & Parole Officer, Colleen McCollum, Senior Probation & Parole Officer, Matthew Barba, Probation & Parole Officer, Emma Tilton, Social Services Specialist, Cherry Lane Probation & Parole Office**

These dedicated DOC employees are part of the Group Violence Intervention (GVI) Team that directs DOC resources and services to high risk, gang affiliated offenders. Their work includes coordinating with local law enforcement, securing intelligence, and collaborating with state and community social service providers, the Attorney General's Office and other partners to implement Governor Carney's GVI initiative to drive pro-social behaviors, positive outcomes, and reduced recidivism among this at-risk population. DOC's GVI team also leverages its partnership with Juvenile Probation to support GVI amid evidence that criminal behavior trends begin at an early age. This team has been responsive to the needs of the community and to all GVI stakeholders by identifying high risk individuals and providing individualized referral to services such as treatment, housing, safety planning, and job placement. The GVI Team maintains contact with GVI offenders, providing intervention and counseling during times of need while maintaining a high level of accountability for offenders who fail to comply with the terms and conditions of probation or continue to be involved with illegal activities.

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