



NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Monroe B. Hudson, Jr.

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

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Department of Correction presents annual recognition awards for exceptional service during 2021

Dover, DE – During a ceremony this morning at the Department of Correction Administration Building Commissioner Monroe B. Hudson Jr. presented more than a dozen DOC officers and staff members with annual departmental awards for providing service above and beyond the call of duty during 2021. DOC annual recognition awards are traditionally presented during *National Correctional Officers and Employees Week*, which takes place this year from May 1 – 7. Watch [the recorded livestream of today's awards ceremony by clicking HERE](#).

“The job of a correctional professional can be extremely difficult and challenging, and over the past year COVID-19 has compounded those challenges,” **said Commissioner Monroe B. Hudson Jr.** “Today, as we continue to navigate those challenges we honor our DOC heroes, the men and women who have truly gone above and beyond in service to our state and to the Department of Correction mission of public safety and rehabilitation.”

The following officers and staff members have been recognized with Annual Departmental Awards for 2021:

2021 Correctional Officer of the Year: Corporal Renee Gutowski, James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC)

Corporal Renee Gutowski from the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) played a leading role in the JTVCC American Correctional Association Accreditation team, helping the facility earn the highest score of all Delaware Level V prisons during its first-ever ACA audit last fall. She actively participated in the JTVCC Policy Review Committee to ensure that policies align with the latest and most effective best practices and ensure they meet hundreds of national accreditation standards. In addition, she shared responsibility for preparing JTVCC for its Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) audit last April by gathering records and information to demonstrate compliance with rigorous standards. Thank you Cpl. Gutowski for your exceptional dedication, professionalism, and commitment to JTVCC and the DOC.

2021 Probation & Parole Officer of the Year and Commissioner's Award for Heroism: Senior Probation & Parole Officer George Ramsburg, Kent County

Senior Probation Officer George Ramsburg a member of the United States Marshals Service First State Fugitive Task Force, was working alongside officers from the Milford Police Department and Delaware State Police following a lead that a violent fugitive wanted for Attempted Murder and Violation of Parole from Pennsylvania was hiding in a Rehoboth area hotel. Upon locating the fugitive and attempting to take him into custody the offender opened fire, seriously wounding one Officer. While the wounded officer was transported to a nearby hospital SPO Ramsburg secured the scene until additional police units arrived. Despite facing risk to his own life SPO Ramsburg displayed incredible courage pursuing an offender while taking fire from the suspect. The DOC is proud of SPO Ramsburg for his bravery and heroic action to remove a threat and save lives.

2021 Employee of the Year: Ben Solloway, Physical Plant Maintenance/Trades Mechanic, DOC Administration Building

Physical Plant Maintenance/Trades Mechanic Ben Solloway is assigned to handle the maintenance and cleanliness for the DOC Administrative Building which houses approximately 200 DOC employees, vendors, and guests. Ben is one of the hardest working professionals in the Administration Building, always demonstrating a willingness to complete a variety of daily functions and special projects, from painting office walls, changing light bulbs, hanging pictures, vacuuming, and even shoveling snow to prevent injuries. Ben is always quietly hard at work behind the scenes and with an ever present positive attitude. His commitment and dedication to provide all staff with the best and safest work environment possible.

2021 Team of the Year: James T. Vaughn ACA Accreditation Team members, Administrative Specialist Kara Austin, Inmate Classification Officer Chelsey Pernic, Correctional Officer Annette Walker, Corporal Nicholas Brown, Corporal Renee Gutowski, Sergeant Deandra Hilts, Sergeant Walter Kiser, Staff Sergeant David Townsend, Lieutenant Robert Flint, Staff Lieutenant John Goldman, Staff Lieutenant Veronica Tilghman, Captain Brian Reynolds, Captain Michael Trader, Major John Brennan, Major Jason Schaffer, Deputy Warden Natasha Hollingsworth, Deputy Warden Philip Parker, Warden Robert May

These dedicated employees led the effort to prepare James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) for its first-ever American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation audit which took place in November 2021. [JTVCC was found by auditors to be compliant with 100% of applicable mandatory standards and 99.5% of applicable non-mandatory standards, the highest score achieved by any Level 5 prison facility in Delaware to-date.](#) JTVCC's ACA Accreditation team worked diligently through many obstacles for more than one year to achieve this result, continually demonstrating outstanding work ethic and performance that far exceeds expectations as well as exhibiting superior competence in organization, prioritization and dedication. Each team member put in many hours of extra work in addition to completing their normal duties to ensure the facility exceeded audit requirements. Securing an exceptional audit score and an accreditation recommendation reflects JTVCC's determined work to move the facility forward and create positive change in institutional culture.

Additionally, during today's ceremony the Department of Correction also presented **Commissioner's Recognition Awards** to the following community partners who have volunteered their time this past year to support Department of Correction programs:

DOC Fitness Challenge: Kateri Peters, owner of Cross Fit KillShot Gym in Smyrna, Delaware

This past winter Commissioner Hudson established a 6-week DOC Fitness Challenge to support employee health and wellness by encouraging each staff member to build physical activity and stress management into their daily lives. Physical activity has many benefits to overall health and wellness, including managing stress, reducing the risk of chronic illnesses, increasing energy, managing weight, and improving resilience. Kateri Peters, the owner of Cross Fit KillShot in Smyrna, volunteered her time by filming weekly videos featuring healthy eating tips and fitness routines for beginners and more experienced participants. Commissioner Hudson recognized Kateri with a Special Recognition Award for her generous donation of time to make this program a success.

COVID Vaccination Clinics: Doctor Sandra Gibney and Mrs. Annie Coons

DOC healthcare staff have continued to provide ongoing COVID vaccine education and vaccination clinics in all DOC facilities. In addition, DOC's medical team have invited trusted leaders from the community to share those same resources with DOC staff and incarcerated individuals. Doctor Sandra Gibney, MD and Mrs. Annie Coons enthusiastically answered that call. Over the past year they have generously volunteered their time to visit every state prison facility to provide face-to-face COVID education, vaccine advocacy and on-demand COVID vaccinations, most recently this past week during a return visit to Howard R. Young Correctional Institution in Wilmington. Thanks to their personal engagement hundreds of additional inmates have chosen to receive COVID vaccinations and booster shots. In recognition of their selfless service Commissioner Hudson presented them with Commissioner's Recognition Awards.

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