



State honors corrections officers at annual ceremony

ALBANY — State officials on Thursday awarded a medal of honor and four medals of merit to employees at the state's prisons and corrections department.

They also honored 41 employees who died in the line of duty since 1861, including 11 from the 1971 Attica riots. The 13th annual ceremony was held at the Albany Training Academy and overseen by the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision.

"Today, as in years past, this solemn ceremony commemorates the dedication and professionalism exhibited by individuals of extraordinary courage," Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement.

The medal of honor was awarded to Karen Gormley, a senior parole officer at the Bronx Area Community Supervision Office. She was severely injured as she successfully apprehended a parolee and took away a firearm, state officials said.

The four medals of merit went to, according to a news release:

-- Sgt. Robert Shields of Five Points Correctional Facility in Romulus, Seneca County, for rescuing a woman who was struggling in a river. He is now a lieutenant

at Elmira Correctional Facility.

-- Ulster Correctional Facility correction officer John Iocovello for during tropical storm Irene using a facility backhoe to remove debris that caused flooding at the prison.

-- Woodbourne Correctional Facility officer William Tolli in Sullivan County and Sullivan Correctional Facility officer Mike Cassidy for aiding a motorist after a car accident. The driver was later identified as Nicholas Chalk, a rehabilitation coordinator at Woodbourne.

Since 1984, the corrections department has awarded 110 medals of merit and 47 medals of honor. The names of fallen employees are enshrined with plaques at the academy.

The Attica prison riot in 1971 is the nation's deadliest prison uprising when 39 men were killed when State Police retook the prison.

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For a list of the deceased workers who were honored Thursday, visit:

<http://www.doccs.ny.gov/PressRel/12MemorialMedals/EmployeesDiedinLineofDuty.html>

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