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DOCCS holds ceremony honoring fallen parole officers

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The New York State Parole Officers Memorial was dedicated in 2002 and holds the names of seven parole and probation officers who were killed in the line of duty. The officers were honored on July 24 during Pretrial, Probation and Parole Supervision week proclaimed by Gov. Andrew Cuomo. *Photo by Richard Moody.*



The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision color guard presented the colors for the ceremony. *Photo by Richard Moody.*



Assistant Deputy Secretary for Public Safety Mary Kavaney stressed the danger and importance of the job parole officers do for the state. *Photo by Richard Moody.*



Tina Sanford, chair of the Parole Board and John Walters, the Public Employee Federation Division 236 council leader, place a wreath on the parole officers memorial. *Photo by Richard Moody.*

On July 24, the Department of Corrections and Community Supervision held its 11th annual ceremony to honor fallen parole and probation officers who were killed in the line of duty.

A wreath was laid upon a stone memorial, dedicated in 2002, with the names of seven fallen officers etched onto it. The sound of parole officer Daniel Tobin's bagpipes stopped and left a somber silence in the unseasonably cool July morning as fellow parole officer Rev. W. Lynn Hamilton delivered the invocation.

"Every year when I look down at the faces of our fallen heroes, I'm struck with how dangerous the work of the supervising staff is," said Mary Kavaney, assistant deputy secretary for public safety. "Whether you die at the hands of a mob hit, apprehending a dangerous felon or in a car accident, each and every aspect of a parole officer's job is dangerous."

Kavaney discussed the great work DOCCS has done in regards to the safety of parole and probation officers. She said that after two incidents in which an officer was shot at their desk, the department made it a priority to install metal detectors in each office.

"Not only are parole officers dedicated to public safety, they are dedicated to each other and they take care of their own," Kavaney said, regarding the level of commitment the officers have to their work, despite the obvious dangers it can present to them.

Pretrial, probation and parole supervision has played a vital role in New York state's criminal justice system since 1841. These professionals are a crucial part of the state's public safety system, supervising more than 200,000 people in New York state on community supervision. Monitoring may take the form of home visits, drug testing, ensuring the offender attends counseling sessions and assisting them to find suitable housing and employment.

"We are in the business of public safety and very often, that means putting your own safety concerns aside and putting yourself on the line trying to protect all New Yorkers," said DOCCS Acting Commissioner Anthony Annucci.

Annucci stressed that he is completely committed to giving parole and probation officers anything and everything they need to keep them safe on the job. Annucci also reiterated his commitment to the fallen officers, pledging his attendance at every memorial in the years to come and urging the crowd to do the same.

"All of us should join together in this commitment and never forget what they have given for the benefit of all New Yorkers," said Annucci.

In an official proclamation read by Deputy Commissioner of the Division of Probation and Correctional Alternatives Robert Maccarone, Gov. Andrew Cuomo officially declared July 21 to 27, 2013 as the state's Pre-trial, Probation and Parole Supervision week.

"Through early intervention, advocacy, timely enforcement, admonishment and advice, these professionals are important role models in forces for positive change within their respective communities, who make a significant difference in the lives of countless individuals," the governor's proclamation read.

Last year, the 3,100 Probation Officers across New York supervised 118,000 adult probationers, including 26,000 DWIs, 5,000 sex offenders and 5,200 offenders convicted of crimes associated with domestic violence.

"Probation Officers are part law enforcement official, part social worker, but the work they do is 100 percent integral to community safety," said Division of Criminal Justice Services Deputy Commissioner Michael Green. "Probation officers hold offenders accountable, reduce re-arrest, promote victim and community safety, and assist offenders so they can work to change their thinking and behavior, resulting in them leading law-abiding and productive lives."