

DOCS



TODAY

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New York State Department of Correctional Services

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Commissioner awards employee medals



Commissioner Goord paid tribute to the Department's heroes, past and present, as he awarded a total of eight Medals of Honor and Medals of Merit during the 2004 Memorial Service and Medals Ceremony held June 10 at the memorial site in front of the Training Academy in Albany. He called Department employees the best-trained, most professional and dedicated in the nation.

Commissioner honors sacrifice of employees, past and present

Honors medal recipients, fallen heroes, 'every day heroes' of today's work force

The following is the text of the Commissioner's remarks during the June 10 Memorial Service and Medals Ceremony:

Ladies and gentlemen, before I offer a few remarks, let us all bow our heads for a moment of silent prayer in honor of our nation's 40th President, Ronald Wilson Reagan.

I want to thank Senator Volker and Assemblyman Aubry for joining us today.

It is always heartening to know that the Legislature is mindful of the sacrifices made by our employees. It is also important that you join with us in recognizing their bravery and sacrifice.

Today we honor the actions of seven employees at home ... and the ultimate sacrifice by a co-worker half a world away.

That fact is representative of what we see in the media today: A connection between our prison employees at home, and actions occurring halfway around the globe.

Never before have we held this ceremony when the operation of prisons has been among the top media stories of the day.

Not only here in New York, or even across the nation.

But around the world, because of events in a prison in Iraq.

And those events in the Mid-East have resulted in some questions as to how we operate our prisons here in the United States.

I have seen many of the stories about conditions and operations in state and private prisons across the nation.



Law Enforcement Torch Runners for the Special Olympics made an appearance at the Academy prior to the ceremony.

But not one of those national stories has been critical of New York's prisons.

That confirms what we have known for years: that our Correctional staff, uniformed and civilian, is the best trained and the most dedicated in the nation.

It starts with the fact that, unlike in private prisons, our prisons require each officer recruit to take a civil service exam. You then underwent physicals, background investigations and psychological screening.

Only then could you be considered for our eight-week training session here at the Academy, followed by three weeks of on-the-job training.

Private prisons do not protect their employees with the security that such professional screening and training provides.

Even then, each of our officers also receives 40 hours of in-service training annually. That's more than three-quarters of a million hours of training each year. That does not include the thousands of hours of ongoing training for civilian personnel.

We don't stop with screening potential candidates and then training our personnel.

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ON THE COVER: The masthead brings DOCS|TODAY together with its past via "Copper John," the Colonial soldier who has stood atop the front gate of Auburn, the state's oldest prison, since 1821. The American flag was affixed to his bayonet in memory of those who lost their lives during the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks upon the United States. The flag itself was taken from a photograph of it flying above Ground Zero.

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We invite independent monitors to measure each prison: we require each prison to be accredited by the American Correctional Association. That ensures we meet nationally-accepted standards for prison operation and administration.

We also have our own auditors from Albany who review every facility's compliance with our own rules, regulations, policies and directives.

This has all contributed to 20-year lows in inmate attacks on our employees and other inmates.

It has also led to a reduction in "throwing" incidents in our institutions.

Enforcing one set of fair and consistent rules makes our prisons more secure for staff and humane for inmates.

From 2001-2003, we saw a 10 percent decline in the rate of inmate grievances alleging staff misconduct – during a period in which the inmate population declined by only three percent.

Fifty percent of inmates were enrolled in program assignments when Governor Pataki took office. Partly through the efforts of our civilian employees, that has since risen to two-thirds of the inmate population. And we all know that inmates involved in meaningful programs have less time to disrupt facility operations.

Their participation also helps them to stay within the law when they are released. The rate of inmates returned for committing new crimes has dropped by 50 percent since 1995.

So we are also meeting our mandate to help make New York's streets safer.

Our prisons and our communities are safer, in part, because of the sacrifice made by the 35 heroes whose plaques we display in honor inside of the Academy's memorial room. To their survivors honoring us with their presence today, I say thank you. Thank you for their service. And thank you for their commitment that led them to make the ultimate sacrifice in protecting the people of New York state.

Today, we add that 35th plaque in memory of Clinton prison guard Dennis O'Brien. He was struck by a train and killed on January 11,



Joining Commissioner Goord in leading the procession from the Academy to the memorial site are (from left) Senator Dale M. Volker, Shaykh Ismail Abdul Rahim and Assemblyman Jeffrion L. Aubry.

1904, as he searched a rail yard for an escapee. Described as a man of many good qualities, he was one of the most popular officers at the Dannemora prison where he had worked for nearly 15 years. He left a wife and seven children. Prison Guard O'Brien, through his sacrifice a century ago, now joins our pantheon of heroes.



Guests view memorial plaques in Academy.

Today, we also honor the ultimate sacrifice paid by Inspector General Investigator Michael Williams. This "citizen soldier" left as a patriot for Iraq and returned to us a hero. As Governor Pataki wrote in a letter to his family, "Michael served our country with tremendous dedication."

I can also add he served this Department with professionalism and integrity.

Today we also honor our seven Medal of Merit recipients. We recognize each of them as among the best of today's Correctional Services employees.

We are thankful for their service – in the best work force in the nation.

Today, we should also recognize our "every day heroes" – the 30,000 men and women who work daily in our 70 prisons and make ours the best correctional system in the nation.

I am proud of each and every one of you.

And I thank each of you for your hard work, your dedication and your professionalism. 📖

Memorial roll adds 35th name as 124th employee medal awarded

Memorial roll dates back to 1861; Medals program completes 20th year

Clouds disappeared leaving a sky of blue as bagpipers played to lead the procession that marked the start the Department's annual awards ceremony on June 10 in Albany.

Even before the ceremony began, those in attendance were treated to performances by soloist Counselor Sharon Flanagan of Gouverneur, DOCS' own Emerald Society band (see related story on page 13), and the Green Haven color guard which later in the afternoon would win the gold medal for the third year in a row in the DOCS Employee Olympics.

Bagpipers CO Jeffery Forsythe of Gouverneur and IG Investigator Michael Hudson opened the ceremony by piping dignitaries, medal recipients, their families and those of their fallen colleagues to their seats at the memorial site in front of the Academy. (See full page of ceremony photos on page 12.)

Approximately 600 attendees saw one Medal of Honor awarded as seven other employees received Medals of Merit for their bravery and valor during 2003.

That brought to 124 the number of medals that have been awarded since the awards program began in 1984.

The Medal of Honor is presented to "an employee whose actions in the line of duty evidenced an extraordinary degree of courage, bravery or heroism."

The Medal of Merit is awarded to "an employee for extraordinary performance in the line of duty or for an exceptional contribution to the Department."

During the one-hour ceremony at the Albany Training Academy, a 35th name was added to the Memorial Roll of prison employees who have died in the line of duty since 1861 as the result of inmate actions.

The posthumous award of the Medal of Honor to Inspector General Investigator Michael L. Williams was made to Deputy Inspector General Barbara Leon. She is a close family friend who stood in when a previous engagement prevented Mr. William's family from attending the ceremony. (See story on page 6.)

A host of employee family members and friends were present as Commissioner Goord presented Medals of Merit to:

- Great Meadow CO Donald M. Ballard, who came upon a car accident and extricated its unconscious operator seconds before the burning car burst into flames. The motorist later died of his injuries (See story on page 8.)
- Mid-State COs David A. Buckbee and Lawrence M. Ciaccia, who rescued an elderly couple and a child from a burning building – only to reenter the inferno after learning that two people were still unaccounted for. They were able to save a fourth person before the flames and smoke forced their retreat. (See story on page 7.)
- Attica CO Andrew D. Dannheim, who rescued his wheelchair-bound, elderly neighbor from a fast-moving fire that gutted the latter's home in less than a half-hour. (See story on page 9.)
- Clinton ASAT Assistant Paul J. O'Connell, who was chaperoning a youth group in Nicaragua when he rescued two girls caught in a treacherous riptide. ASAT is the acronym for the Department's Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment program. (See story on page 6.)
- Albion CO Michael Rybczynski, who came to the assistance of a Buffalo police officer in restraining a drug-crazed felon engaged in a "life or death" struggle with the officer. (See story on page 8.)



Inspector General Investigator Michael Hudson and CO Jeffery Forsythe pipe *Amazing Grace*.



Orleans Sgt. Brian Freeman (left) and Attica Sgt. Cesar Martinez play *Taps*.

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Commissioner Goord (center) is joined by 2004 Medal of Merit recipients (from left) Mid-State CO David A. Buckbee, Clinton ASAT Assistant Paul J. O’Connell, Mid-State CO Lawrence M. Ciaccia, Coxsackie CO Michael F. Venne, Albion CO Michael Rybczynski, Attica CO Andrew D. Dannheim and Great Meadow CO Donald M. Ballard.

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- Coxsackie CO Michael F. Venne, who swam 100 feet in the icy waters of the Saranac River into a raging whirlpool in an unsuccessful attempt to save a drowning fisherman. *(See story on page 9.)*

The Invocation was prayed during the ceremony by Shaykh Ismail Abdul Rahim, DOCS’ Ministerial and Program Coordinator for Muslim chaplains.

Recalling the events of 9-11 that ultimately led to the war against terrorism and the deaths of Mr. Williams and more than 600 of his fellow soldiers, Shaykh Rahim said, “In this day, we have come to remember what hate is capable of.

“In this day, we have also come to celebrate that love has and will overcome hate, for love is much more powerful than hate.

“In this day we have come to remember that although destroying buildings is easy, our spirit will never be broken.

“This is our day, one in which we, members of this human family, stand in solidarity and unity in our fight against hate, destruction and evil.

“This is our day, one in which we claim our right to live in

peace and security without fear or threat of terrorism and aggression.

“While we face many challenges,” Shaykh Rahim said, “these claims can only be fulfilled with our commitment, dedication, perseverance and solidarity and most important of all, our prayers.”



Shaykh Rahim

In proclaiming June 6-12 as Correctional Services Employee Week, Governor Pataki noted “the Department will posthumously award Specialist Williams its Medal of Honor and bestow the Medal of Merit upon seven current employees while observing the memory of 35 employees who lost their lives as a result of inmate actions while in the line of duty and service to New York State.” *(See Proclamation on page 16.)*

Commissioner Goord said, “In sacrificing his life for all Americans, Investigator Williams displayed the professionalism and bravery we have come to expect and respect among our military personnel, especially among our neighbors serving as ‘citizen soldiers.’ Our Medal of Merit recipients personify what it means to be a ‘good neighbor’ in the communities that invited our facilities into their midst: they risked their lives in an attempt to save those of others.”

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O'Connell: 'I just knew it had to be done'

Paul O'Connell has never been more than a "recreational" swimmer. But he didn't think about that last February when tragedy was playing out before his eyes.

All that mattered was that two of the teenagers he was chaperoning on a humanitarian trip to Nicaragua were caught offshore in an ocean riptide.

Their fellow volunteers from the Plattsburgh-area North Country Mission of Hope had managed to struggle back to shore, but Darcie Black and Lindsay Bombard were weakening with each passing minute and unable to get back to land on their own.

So Mr. O'Connell, an ASAT Assistant at Clinton, plunged into the water and began swimming out to the girls, a journey that would take 15 to 20 minutes but one whose length he barely remembers.

"I knew something had to be done. I guess you get a little adrenalin going. It happened so quickly I guess I lost all track of time," he said.

"There was no way I was going to stop. The thought of giving up never occurred, I just knew it had to be done."

Once he reached the girls, who had

been in the water for more than a hour, Mr. O'Connell found they were too exhausted and the current too strong for him to pull them to land. He improvised.

With Darcie holding on to and supporting Lindsay, he put the force of the water to work for them.

Each time a wave came he pushed or threw the girls to the top, creating a body-surfing effect that gained about 10 feet with each attempt.

After about 15 such maneuvers they came within reach of a Canadian vacationer who rushed to help when one of the volunteers pleaded for his assistance. A lifeguard, he swam out to the trio with a rope.

Tragedy was averted.

"She never, ever would have made it without Paul going out to them. Had it not been for Paul we'd be minus one. We're very thankful," said Lindsay's father. "When she got to shore there was absolute, total exhaustion."

Mr. O'Connell said he does not want to sound melodramatic, but, "I think I was honestly meant to be there for some reason...It was really scary." 📖



Mr. O'Connell is congratulated by Lindsay Bombard after receiving Medal of Merit from Commissioner Goord.



Medal of Honor given posthumously to IG Inv. Michael L. Williams



Inv. Williams

Inspector General Investigator Michael L. Williams was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for giving his life in service to the nation. His citation read:

"On October 17, 2003, Investigator Michael L. Williams of the Inspector General's Office was on duty in Iraq, serving our Nation and protecting our freedom. He was an Army Specialist assigned to the 105th Military Police Company of the Army National Guard.

"Specialist Williams and several other soldiers were returning to camp in a military vehicle along the MSR Jackson near Baghdad. He was killed in action when their vehicle struck and detonated an improvised explosive device in the roadway.

"Mr. Williams' choice to put his own life in danger for the safety of all Americans is in the highest service that a citizen can render their Nation. His death reminds all Americans of the bravery and valor of those serving in our armed forces.

"It is with the greatest respect and deepest admiration that we posthumously recall his sacrifice today." 📖



Commissioner Goord presents Inv. Williams' Medal of Honor to Deputy IG Barbara Leon, a close friend of the Williams family.

Officers called heroes for rescuing Oneida couple from house fire

Mid-State COs David A. Buckbee and Lawrence M. Ciaccia had never met before fate or coincidence or providence brought them together early in the morning of March 4, 2003. But they quickly formed a rescue team that saved four lives.

Both officers were driving to work (CO Ciaccia was assigned to Marcy at the time) and came separately upon a house fire in the Town of Marcy between Rome and Utica.

CO Buckbee was first on the scene when he spotted smoke coming from the house. He backed up into the driveway, where he was met by another motorist who said she had just called 911 for assistance. He went to the front door and rang the bell several times, but received no response.

Hearing voices inside, he broke open the door fearing the residents were in danger and unable to escape. There, fighting through thick smoke, he found Lorenzo DiAngelo, an elderly man with an oxygen tank, Mr. DiAngelo's daughter Concetta Debellis and her grandson. CO Buckbee steered all three out of the house, calling to the boy to keep him headed in the right direction.

Once outside, he was told a second boy was still inside in a rear bedroom and an elderly woman – the rescued woman's mother – was upstairs in a bedroom above the attached garage.

CO Buckbee went back into the house crawling through the dense smoke to the rear bedroom, calling out for the boy. Once he located the child, the officer carried the boy toward the front door and passed him to a neighbor.

Meanwhile, CO Ciaccia had also seen the smoking building from the highway and had pulled in to help. Together the two officers went to the rear of the building and began what would become numerous attempts to rescue the 90-year-old woman still trapped inside.

Repeatedly the COs entered the building in an effort to locate the woman, only to be driven back by the smoke, flames and heat. When State Trooper Lawrence Marfone arrived at the front door he was directed to the rear of the building and he too joined in the rescue attempt.

On one of their rescue attempts Officer Buckbee located the

family dog and carried it to safety, but finally the fire became fully involved. When further attempts to enter the building became impossible, CO Ciaccia went to comfort the four occupants while they waited for fire and rescue personnel.

Even arriving firefighters found it impossible to rescue the woman, who died in the blaze.



Commissioner Goord presents Medal of Merit to COs Lawrence M. Ciaccia (above) and David A. Buckbee.



Said a State Trooper, "They were heroes. Their actions definitely saved some of the lives, if not all those that they helped out."

CO Buckbee said his reaction was automatic when he learned there were still people in the house after he had led the first group to safety.

"I didn't even think about it," he said. "I just went back in."

CO Ciaccia said he did not know his colleague before that morning, but recognized him as a correction officer. He credited Department training, which teaches employees how to handle unexpected and dangerous circumstances, with helping prepare them to respond to the emergency.

"We reacted to the situation," he said. "I'm just glad the Lord put me in the right place at the right time. I'm grateful for that."

Ms. Debellis said her mother had been awakened that morning by the smell of smoke. When she went to investigate Ms. Dibellis saw smoke coming through the kitchen walls and opened the garage door to go to the cellar, thinking that might be the source. Instead, the garage was full of smoke.

After she had been rescued from the burning building she was taken to a neighbor's house, she said, so she did not see much of what happened next. "They didn't want me to see much," she

offered.

Nonetheless, and in spite of the loss of her mother, she was grateful for the bravery of the fire and rescue personnel, State Police and COs Buckbee and Ciaccia. "They were all very good," she said.

The house she lived in for 35 years was a total loss. Construction started on her new home at the same location three months after the fire. She moved in at the end of January 2004. 📖

Albion CO helps Buffalo police officer subdue violent suspect

Buffalo Police Officer Franklin King laughs when asked if he was glad to have Albion CO Michael Rybczynski in his corner, then relates with a law enforcement officer's understatement the incident that brought the two together.



"If Mike didn't come out at that point I'd have been there for a long time," Officer King said.

On Nov. 19, 2003 CO Rybczynski heard sounds of a fight coming from his back yard. He then saw Officer King in a violent struggle with a suspect, and came to the officer's aid.

"I don't think there was much time to think about it," CO Rybczynski said. "I just jumped in."

Officer King had chased the robbery suspect through rear lots and caught him in the Rybczynski yard. He wrestled the suspect, who was high on crack and refusing arrest, from the yard to the street. Pepper spray had been ineffective in subduing the man.

"I had him around his back. He wasn't going anywhere, but neither was I," he said. That's when CO Rybczynski joined the fray, and the two law enforcement officers struggled for five minutes before they were finally able to pin the suspect's hands behind his back so he could be handcuffed.

During the ordeal, after he had called for help, the officer's police radio malfunctioned and he was unable to broadcast his exact location, leaving his fellow officers to search frantically for him. "Everyone was going nuts trying to find me," he said.

Only after the suspect had been subdued was Officer King able to use his car radio to summon help to the scene.

Police Lt. Richard Doyle called CO Rybczynski's actions "an extraordinary act of bravery."

"Mr. Rybczynski's actions may have saved the life of Officer Franklin King," he said. "Officer King was quite literally in a life and death struggle with a violent robbery suspect who had been smoking crack all day and was refusing to be arrested."

CO Rybczynski said he has been in job-related scuffles before, but nothing like this violent episode. Downplaying the danger, he said, "I did what I had to do. I think anybody would have done the same thing." 



Buffalo Police Officer Franklin King (above right) congratulates CO Michael Rybczynski after the Albion Officer received the Medal of Merit from Commissioner Goord (at left).

Great Meadow CO credits training for lifesaving effort

Coming upon a vehicle off the road and in flames, Great Meadow CO Donald M. Ballard's first instinct was to find out if anyone was trapped inside. It was a critical reaction.

Driving along a Washington County highway in the early evening of Sept. 8, 2003 Officer Ballard spotted smoke ahead. As he reached the source he discovered a sport utility vehicle that had veered off the road and crashed, its engine compartment in flames.

At the same time, the local fire chief and a passing motorist stopped to investigate. The three would become a team in a dangerous rescue mission.

Approaching the burning vehicle CO Ballard saw an apparently unconscious man behind the steering wheel. He tried immediately to pull the man from the driver's side of the vehicle, but the door would not open.

With the fire and smoke intensifying, he worked his way to the opposite side and entered the vehicle through the passenger's side door. He then began searching for the seat belt release through the thick smoke and flames pouring from the dashboard.

Meanwhile, the chief was using a fire extinguisher in an attempt to slow the flames as Officer Ballard worked inside the vehicle.

Keeping a cool head as he raced against time, CO Ballard succeeded in freeing the driver from his seat belt and opened the driver's side door from the inside. He ran back to the

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Commissioner presents medal to CO Michael F. Venne.

Coxsackie CO Venne honored for efforts to save fisherman

A letter from a passing motorist describes well the bravery that is honored in the Medal of Merit awarded to Coxsackie CO Michael F. Venne.

“The North Country, CO Venne’s family and co-workers at Coxsackie CF should be proud that his quick thinking, training and knowledge contributed in his attempts to save the drowning victim in the cold rapid waters of the Saranac River with possible danger to his own safety,” she wrote.

“CO Venne’s efforts to try to save the angler should be recognized and commended for his courageous attempts.”

On the evening of June 18, 2003 Samuel Thuesen, a 76-year-old fly fisherman, slipped while trying to cross the upper Saranac River, lost his footing and was swept into the heavy currents of the deep, frigid water. His companion rushed up the river bank to the highway and began to flag down vehicles for help.

CO Venne, who was driving to work for training the next day, stopped his vehicle and hastened to the river’s edge. There he saw Mr. Thuesen trapped in a section of the river known as “the whirlpool” about 100 feet from shore. The water in this spot was ice cold and 90 feet deep.

Determining that Mr. Thuesen was too far away to attempt a

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‘An uneventful day’ changes for Attica CO Dannheim

An uneventful day changed in a hurry for Attica CO Andrew Dannheim on Feb. 17, 2003.

He was making lunch that day for his young daughter when she announced the house next door was on fire. “She told me, ‘Daddy, the house is on fire; you have to call 911,’” CO Dannheim told his local newspaper in its coverage of the fire.

Reacting in the appropriate sequence, CO Dannheim’s first response was to make the 911 call to bring firefighters to the scene. He then rushed next door, where an elderly wheelchair-bound neighbor, Timothy Baron, lived in a rear apartment.

Without regard for his own safety, the officer entered the burning building and proceeded to help Mr. Baron escape to safety. Having done that, he reentered the apartment to rescue his neighbor’s pet.

“I got Tim out and he wanted his cat, so I went back in,” he told the newspaper.

The quick-moving fire spread from the rear of the building to the front in about 20 minutes, and the structure was a total loss. When firefighters arrived on the scene the entire rear of the house was fully involved and the fire was extending to the houses on either side, including that of CO Dannheim.

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Commissioner congratulates CO Andrew Dannheim.

Commissioner awards medals ...

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Speaking for the Senate, Dale M. Volker of Erie County, chairman of the Committee on Codes, said, "We live in difficult and trying times, yet our men and women continue to make professional and personal sacrifices to protect and preserve our communities and our country.

"I have for the past 32 years had the pleasure of meeting with Correction Officers and their families from throughout our great state. They are good, honest and hardworking people who have the monumental task of protecting us from some of the most destructive and dangerous human beings on earth. The job is fraught with dangers on a daily basis, as is indicated by the names of those who have fallen and are remembered in the memorial room of the Academy and through the memorial in front of it.

"To those who have passed," Senator Volker said, "I extend my deepest sympathies to their families and loved ones. To those who we our honoring today for their heroic acts, I commend you, thank you, and appreciate what you have done to honor your profession, your person, and your state."

Speaking for the Assembly, Jeffrion L. Aubry of Queens,

chairman of the Committee on Correction, said, "I congratulate the honorees for their unwavering courage in nobly risking their lives in order to preserve the life of another, and for their devotion to the performance of their law enforcement and civic duties."

35th name added to Memorial Roll

As the names of the 35 fallen heroes were read aloud, Emerald Society Band member CO Stephen Murdza of Coxsackie sounded one drum beat.

Medal or Merit recipients COs David Buckbee and Lawrence Ciaccia then placed a wreath in front of the memorial, itself an Empire blue granite stone standing 12 feet high, six feet wide and 18 inches deep. It weighs 19,711 pounds.

That was followed by a rifle squad firing a 21-gun salute and the playing of *Taps* by trumpeters Attica Sgt. Cesar Martinez and Orleans Sgt. Brian Freeman.

Shaykh Rahim then delivered the Benediction.

Inv. Hudson and CO Forsythe then piped one stanza of *Amazing Grace*, which was then sung *a capella* by Maintenance Supervisor Christopher Gil of Greene.

Master of ceremonies Lucien J. Leclaire, the Deputy Commissioner for Facility Operations, then brought the ceremony to a close. 📖

Clinton 'guard' killed searching for escapees added to memorial roll

The 35th name added to the Memorial Roll was that of Dennis O'Brien, 57, who, according to newspaper accounts at the time, "met a horrible death" on Jan. 11, 1904, while working at Clinton in a job title then known as "prison guard."

Dispatched to a local train station in search of two escapees, he rounded a motionless rail car in the yard, stepped in front of an oncoming train and was killed instantly. Described as "a man of many good qualities," he was "one of the most popular officers" at the Dannemora prison where he had worked for nearly 15 years. He left a wife and seven children.

The deceased employees now total 27 uniformed personnel and eight civilians; the total includes three women. The total comes from Attica (12), Auburn and Clinton (seven each), Sing Sing (three) and one each from Elmira, Fishkill, Eastern, Green Haven and Great Meadow prisons, plus one employee who worked in New York City in the parole division when it was part of the Department of Correctional Services.

No names are inscribed on the memorial stone. Instead, each honoree's name, identifying details and cause of death are enshrined on plaques located in the memorial room of the adjoining Academy. Thirty-two plaques were enshrined when the memorial room was inaugurated in 2000.

Plaques were added in 2001 for Clinton shop foreman Joseph Weitekamp, killed in 1922, and in 2003 for Auburn Keeper Harry A. Casler, slain in 1877. A 35th plaque was added today in honor of Mr. O'Brien.

If the Department confirms the line of duty death of any other employees caused by inmate actions, their names will be added to the Memorial Roll as well. 📖



Posing in front of the plaque honoring Clinton Prison Guard Dennis O'Brien are his great-granddaughter Phyllis Church (left) and granddaughter-in-law Esther Welsh.

Great Meadow CO credits training, experience for lifesaving effort

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other side of the door and pulled the driver clear with the help of the other rescuers. Within seconds of their reaching safety, the vehicle exploded in flames.

The driver was safe from the flames but still unconscious and showed no pulse. An experienced emergency medical technician and rescue squad member, Officer Ballard then began CPR. He is also a facility CPR instructor, and gave the passerby a short course in resuscitation so he could help render first aid.

An ambulance arrived shortly and transported the victim to a local hospital.

A fire truck was on the scene about three minutes after the driver had been extricated, but the vehicle was destroyed before the fire could be put out.

State police investigating the accident credited CO Ballard and his co-rescuers with saving the driver's life.

A week later the driver died of his injuries.

As Officer Ballard's Medal of Merit attests, that fact "does not diminish your efforts or those of the fire chief or the other Good Samaritan who risked your lives to pull him from the fire." 



Commissioner Goord speaks with CO Donald M. Ballard.

Coxsackie CO Venne ...

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rescue from the shore, CO Venne went into the river and swam to the treacherous part of the river where the fisherman was stranded, floating on his back with his head submersed.

Officer Venne lifted the man's head out of the water and dragged him back to shore, fully clothed in soaked clothing with his wading boots filled with water.

Once on shore, CO Venne, assisted by other passers-by, began administering CPR until a rescue squad arrived.

Ambulance workers continued with CPR on the way to the hospital, but Mr. Thuesen did not survive.

Officer Venne attended the wake for Mr. Thuesen, whom he did not know.

"Your fearless action put your life in jeopardy, a fact undiminished by the unfortunate death of Mr. Thuesen," CO Venne's Medal of Merit citation declares.

As the letter writer said, "While the angler's family has sustained a loss, I am sure they are still thankful in some small way for this act of kindness." 

Attica CO Dannheim ...

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With the rear of the building collapsing, firefighters did not risk entering the structure and had to work the fire completely from the outside.

CO Dannheim's actions are credited with saving his neighbor's life.

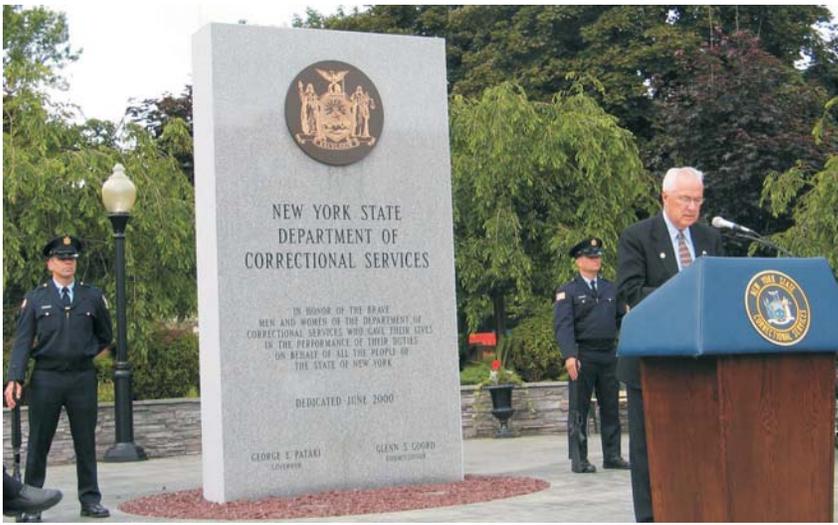
He downplayed his own role in the emergency, preferring to focus on the efforts of the dozens of firefighters who managed to limit the damage to the adjoining houses while they struggled with frozen water lines and low pressure in battling the blaze.

"They busted their tails to save this house and the one on the other side," he said. "I can't thank them enough."

He said his daughter deserves the credit for rescuing their neighbor: "She saved his life as far as I'm concerned."

As for his own heroics, he said, "I'm sure anyone would have done the same thing."

But as his captain noted in nominating him for the Medal of Merit, "It wasn't 'anyone.' It was Officer Dannheim." 



Senator Dale M. Volker speaks while COs Lance Palmateer of Coxsackie (left) and Lloyd Hall of Oneida stand their posts at the memorial.

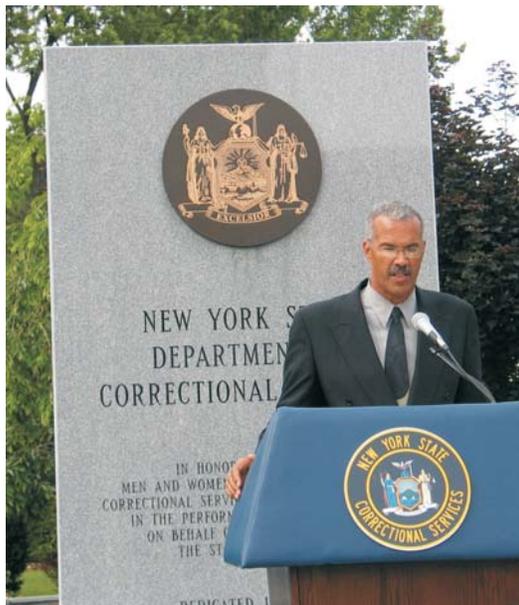


Soloist Sharon Flanagan.



Soloist Christopher Gil.

Members of rifle squad at right from the Albany CERT are COs Todd Johnson, Jeffrey Calder, Jeffrey Dumas, Carl Pierce, Kenneth Lebel, Thomas Doyle and Jeffrey Peek. The squad leader at far right is Sgt. Michael Harms.



Speaker Assemblyman Jeffrion L. Aubry.



The Emerald Society Band performed before the ceremony. Its members include Lt. George Enny, Sgts. Christopher Parry and Kevin Sheridan, COs Joe Boyle, Paul Morris, Dennis Barden, Wayne Holt, Thomas Murphy, Maria Murzda, Stephen Murzda, Greg Satterlee, Mike Palmateer, Ralph Bennette and Iaian McGibbon.

Employees form DOCS Emerald Society at a kitchen table

The New York State Corrections Emerald Society was born on a kitchen table on St. Patrick's Day in 1999. From its modest beginning, with 25 members in a single chapter at Sing Sing, it has grown in just five years to 340 members in 61 facilities.

And its leadership sees great potential for the organization. They see a future in which it could realistically become the largest law enforcement Emerald Society in the country.

The organization was founded by Sgts. John McMorro of Sing Sing and Chris Holder of Queensboro, who were Sing Sing COs at the time and both sons of New York City police officers.

"We were watching the NYC St. Patrick's Day parade in my parents' kitchen and asked each other why Corrections had no Emerald Society," recalled Sgt. McMorro. "Both of our fathers were NYPD, members of their Emerald Society, and marched in the St. Patrick's Day parade every year. We decided we would form an Emerald Society for our Department and that afternoon started collecting the various paperwork needed to form the society."

"One reason we started it was to have something for our own kids," he added.

CO Holder became the organization's first president. CO McMorro succeeded him a few months later. They actively recruited officers, sergeants and lieutenants as they rotated through Sing Sing – a recruitment practice that continues today – and two new chapters were formed over the next year.

There are now seven Corrections Emerald Society chapters: Sing Sing, Downstate, Fishkill, Greene, Great Meadow-Washington-McGregor, Pipe Band and Mid-State.

In addition to the co-founders, the Society's other presidents have been Washington CO Gerry Mason, Mt. McGregor Sgt. Kevin Sheridan and the current president, Downstate CO Jacque Monroe.

The Emerald Society is probably best known for its uniformed members and its pipe band marching and performing in parades and other events.

Its first major public event was marching in the 2001 St. Patrick's Day parade in New York behind the Corrections Emerald Society banner. The pipe band accompanied the marchers at the parade in 2002 and made its first appearance at a DOCS memorial ceremony at Attica later that year.

The pipe band now participates in the Department's Sing

Sing, Green Haven, Attica and statewide memorial services.

In addition to the St. Patrick's Day celebration, the band also represents the Department at other parades and events. This year's schedule includes appearances in parades in Albany, Wallkill and Dutchess County, at West Point, at the Adopt-a-Soldier Armed Forces Day celebration in Saratoga County and at the Special Olympics on Long Island.



The DOCS Emerald Society marches down the canyons of New York City this year in its annual St. Patrick's Day parade.

And this year DOCS won first place for the best-uniformed Emerald Society unit at the St. Patrick's Day parade.

The organization is more than just a marching society, however. While the not-for-profit organization celebrates members' Irish heritage, it also promotes fraternity among all DOCS employ-

ees, projects a positive public image for the Department, supports charitable causes, assists needy members and helps their families in the event of death in the line of duty.

Membership is in four categories: active (for uniformed DOCS employees of Irish ancestry), associate (for civilian employees of Irish descent), social (open to the public) and honorary (bestowed by the statewide council).

CO Monroe stresses that membership is open to anyone: "Our mission is to promote fraternity among our members. We work really hard at giving back to the community."

She described her first St. Patrick's Day parade in New York City with the DOCS Emerald Society as a mixture of humility and satisfaction.

"The first year we were in the parade we were the broom sweepers," the Downstate CO said, "but I can't tell you the amount of pride that gave me for being a corrections officer."

President Monroe said the Emerald Society wants and hopes to grow, adding members who share the mission of fraternity within the Department and community service without. "We have the potential to be one of the biggest Emerald Societies in the country," she said.

All work in the Society is voluntary and unpaid, but there are rewards.

CO Monroe recalls with pride the reception she and her colleagues receive at the St. Patrick's Day parade: "Even when we're in uniform and just walking down the street, the respect we get is just awesome. You can't buy that." 🍀

Transitions

May 2004

Name	Title	Location			
Promotions			Noreen Leandro	Principal Account Clerk	Sing Sing
William J. Hammer	Food Administrator 1	Attica	Betty J. Kennedy	Institution Steward	Southport
Diane M. Wolcott	Info Technology Assistant . . .	Attica	Timmie Edwards	Head Laundry Supervisor . . .	Sullivan
Lyn A. Stockholm	Secretary 1	Attica	Michael Walter	Head Farmer	Sullivan
Joseph F. Bellnier	Dep Supt Security 3	Auburn	Samuel Sanders	Rec Prog Leader 2	Taconic
Tina L. Delisle	Head Account Clerk	Bare Hill	Gerald W. Boice	Head Cook	Upstate
Samuel Yador	Head Cook	Bayview	Linda A. Hayes	Calculations Clerk 2	Upstate
Ruby Philip	Senior Mail & Supply Clerk . .	Bedford Hills	Karen L. Myers	Principal Clerk Personnel. . .	Walkkill
John P. Holland	Plumber & Steamfitter	Bedford Hills	Brian E. Finley	Plant Superintendent C.	Walkkill
Julie A. Sears	Stores Clerk 2	Butler	Colette C. Page	Clerk 2	Walkkill
Rebecca Hofmann	Counselor Trainee 1	Collins	Susan E. Gould	Clerk 2	Watertown
Diane Cassidy	Counselor Aide Trainee	Downstate	Patricia E. Leconey	Dep Supt Security 2	Watertown
Florence M. Daw	Keyboard Specialist 2	Downstate	Michele M. Patti	Licensed Practical Nurse . . .	Wende
Anton J. Birrer	Senior Meat Cutter	Eastern	Diane L. Toporek	Nurse Administrator 1	Wende
Cathryn Weiskopf	Clerk 2	Elmira	William Chapman	Nurse 1	Wende
James O'Rourke	Plant Utilities Engineer 2 . . .	Fishkill	Steven Avery	Cook	Willard
Cynthia Schafer	Counselor Trainee 1	Five Points	William Lewis	Plant Utilities Engineer 2 . . .	Woodbourne
Sharonlee A. Little	Calculations Clerk 2	Five Points	Deborah A. Stedner	Clerk 2	Woodbourne
Marc A. Montroy	Senior Correction Counselor .	Franklin	R. David Coffey	Correction Captain	Collins
Amy B. Pecue	Stores Clerk 2	Great Meadow	Paul Conroy	Correction Captain	Monterey
Jason C. Hoagland	Recreation Program Leader 2	Great Meadow	Lawrence Kanaly	Correction Captain	Riverview
Larry J. Foote	Commissary Clerk 4	Great Meadow	Timothy N. Shea	Correction Lieutenant	Arthur Kill
John S. Jackowski	Ed Supr (Voc)	Great Meadow	Frank R. Wippel	Correction Lieutenant	Bayview
Thomas B. Corcoran	Plant Superintendent B.	Great Meadow	James T. Douglass, Jr.	Correction Lieutenant	Bedford Hills
Sidney C. Johnston	Stores Clerk 2	Green Haven	Joseph A. McKeon	Correction Lieutenant	Sullivan
Thomas J. McGuire, Jr.	Ed Supr (Voc)	Groveland	Robert A. Ball	Correction Lieutenant	Taconic
Richard A. Best, III	Commissary Clerk 3	Hale Creek	Joseph A. Perkins	Correction Sergeant	Downstate
Edward Layton	Plant Utilities Engineer 2 . . .	Lyon Mountain	Kevin Thatcher	Correction Sergeant	Fishkill
Jocasa L. Relf	Principal Account Clerk.	Main Office	Brian E. Curren	Correction Sergeant	Fishkill
Robert B. Bruderer	Info Technology Assistant . . .	Main Office	Bruce L. Herrick	Correction Sergeant	Fishkill
Theresa A. Bush	Infection Control Nurse	Main Office	Terance J. White	Correction Sergeant	Fishkill
Arlene Vasilow	Infection Control Nurse	Main Office	Charles W. Grimshaw	Correction Sergeant	Green Haven
Aranka H. Williams	Clerk 2	Marcy	Stephen B. Doren	Correction Sergeant	Shawangunk
Lenora McCain	Nurse Admin 1	Mohawk	Ralph J. McMurray	Correction Sergeant	Sing Sing
Peggy S. Edwards	Nursing Asst 2	Mohawk	David J. Wheeler	Correction Sergeant	Sing Sing
Cheryl A. Pritchard	Nursing Asst 2	Mohawk	Donald K. McClellan	Correction Sergeant	Taconic
Christopher Gundersen	Plant Supt C	McGregor	Retirements		
Mary Ellen Naughton	Commissary Clerk 2	Oneida	Leonard J. Demarse	Ed Supr (Gen)	Adirondack
Kim M. Dunaway	Clerk 2	Orleans	James Green	Head Cook	Altona
Larry Ebert	General Mechanic	Otisville	William O. Graves	ASAT Program Asst	Altona
Janet Hicks	Head Laundry Supr	Otisville	Charlotte A. Mason	Nurse 2	Cape Vincent
Josefina C. Rios	Inmates Record Coord 1	Queensboro	Irene Wray	Gen Indus Training Supr	Clinton
Patricia A. Scott	Inmate Records Coord 1	Queensboro	Patricia M. Glynn	Inmate Records Coordinator 1	Downstate
Deborah J. Folts	Head Account Clerk	Rochester	Bernice A. Roberts	Keyboard Specialist 1	Eastern

Continued on facing page

Continued from previous page

Jeannette B. Buchanan Dental Hygienist Elmira
Carol A. Adamczyk Nurse Administrator 1 Fishkill
Arthur J. Wilm Teacher 4 Gouverneur
Floyd A. Firman Pharmacist 2 Gouverneur
Norman Chambliss Dep Supt Programs 3 Gowanda
Barbara Whitney Clerk 2 Green Haven
Anthony J. Divito Quality Control Supervisor Green Haven
Karen Gibson Psychologist 2 Groveland
Rosanna Nocero Nurse 2 Lakeview
Linda L. Agbaniyaka Calculations Clerk 1 Lincoln
Linda Pellerin Head Account Clerk Lyon Mountain
Kathleen M. Krstovich Assistant Commissioner Main Office
Henry J. Alexander Dir Inmate Class & Move Main Office
Robert J. Murphy Asst. Dir. SH & Inmate Discip Main Office
Francis J. Sheridan Dir. Facilities Plan & Devel Main Office
Grace Shillinglaw Senior Purchasing Agent Main Office
Lilly E. Richards Nurse 2 Mohawk
Ronald I. Broughton Correction Counselor Mohawk
Joan M. Barringer Nursing Assistant 2 Mohawk
Gary W. Boulerice Head Cook Mohawk
Tory W. Brooks Teacher 4 Orleans
Dorothy C. Leslie Keyboard Specialist 1 Queensboro
Gary R. Rightmyer ASAT Prog. Asst. Summit
Roy A. Girdich Superintendent Upstate
Joan M. Bennett Clerk 2 Upstate
Samuel Spitzer Clinical Physician 2 Washington
Delbert P. Barkman Head Cook Willard
Richard M. Tokar Teacher 4 Willard
Priscilla A. Smalser Nurse 2 Willard
William E. Parolari Vocational Instructor 4 Wyoming
Charles B. Mutz Correction Lieutenant Eastern
Michael Nagy Correction Lieutenant Green Haven
Benton Cross Correction Sergeant Adirondack
Craig Treggett Correction Sergeant Altona
Kathryn G. Scott Correction Sergeant Cape Vincent
Anna J. Cuomo-Bertsch Correction Sergeant Franklin
Carl L. Ward Correction Sergeant Sullivan
Thomas E. Lake Correction Sergeant Sullivan
Lawrence P. Ginter Correction Sergeant Washington
Michael Muscarella Correction Officer Albion
Nicholas T. Corodimas Correction Officer Altona
Robert Clark Correction Officer Attica
William J. Wagner Correction Officer Attica
Daniel R. Eck Correction Officer Attica
Francis Morgan Correction Officer Auburn
Robert M. Mosher Correction Officer Georgetown
Ricky L. Roberts Correction Officer Clinton
Darrel Laclair Correction Officer Coxsackie

Edward Matera Correction Officer Coxsackie
Joyce Jones Correction Officer Downstate
Michael Cooper Correction Officer Eastern
Ronald D. Cantando Correction Officer Elmira
John Pariso Correction Officer Elmira
Sandra V. Bresette Correction Officer Franklin
Thomas Morton Correction Officer Franklin
Paul D. Sansone Correction Officer Franklin
Laurence S. Rivers Correction Officer Franklin
Franklin Ezell Correction Officer Fulton
William V. Gosline Correction Officer Great Meadow
Karen A. Wysocki Correction Officer Green Haven
David C. Ager Correction Officer Green Haven
Eric Alexander Correction Officer Green Haven
Nathan Guzzardi Correction Officer Groveland
Richard T. Spink Correction Officer Groveland
Thomas L. Stout Correction Officer Groveland
Frank W. Sharpe Correction Officer Hudson
Milton T. Evans Correction Officer Livingston
James A. LaGarde Correction Officer Mid-Orange
Carl Russell Correction Officer Moriah
Kathleen Lawson Correction Officer Queensboro
Wayne C. Kellogg Correction Officer Riverview
Thomas K. Graveline Correction Officer Riverview
John W. Amell Correction Officer Riverview
Jeffrey L. Davies Correction Officer Washington
Theodore A. Barkley, Jr. Correction Officer Washington
T. W. Baker Correction Officer Washington
Merrill R. Devlin Correction Officer Watertown
J.D. Wood Correction Officer Wende

Deaths

Chester J. Clegg Correction Officer Fishkill
Ralph Edwards Correction Officer Fishkill
Patsy J. Tresoline Correction Officer Marcy 

On the web . . .

Readers with Internet access can obtain information on the world wide web from the offices of both Governor Pataki and Commissioner Goord. Their addresses:

Governor Pataki: <http://www.state.ny.us>

Commissioner Goord: <http://www.docs.state.ny.us>

Colorized editions of DOCS|TODAY, beginning with the January 2003 edition, now appear on the DOCS website. Editions are posted as PDFs when they are sent to the Elmira print shop for publication. 



State of New York

Executive Chamber

Proclamation

Whereas, the citizens of the Empire State recognize the highest level of commitment among our State's Department of Correctional Services employees contributes to the steady vigilance, dedication and professionalism that remain core values of DOCS, as this important component of our State's law enforcement system is also recognized to be a demanding and challenging line of public service; and

Whereas, thousands of DOCS "citizen soldiers" have and are now serving in the National Guard and Army Reserves, on duty protecting New Yorkers, Americans, and people in other countries of the world, with many of them stationed in the Middle East as part of Operation Iraqi Freedom; and

Whereas, among these bravest of Americans was Inspector General Investigator Michael L. Williams, who was activated as an Army Specialist in the 105th Military Police Company based in New York; the entire family of New Yorkers pays solemn tribute to Specialist Williams who was killed on October 17, 2003, when an improvised explosive device detonated beneath the vehicle carrying him and other soldiers outside of Baghdad; and

Whereas, thousands of DOCS co-workers proudly stepped forward to perform additional prison duties in the absence of these "citizen soldiers" as part of their contribution to our Nation's security; and

Whereas, DOCS employee professionalism has guided more than 56,000 inmates to earn early release under programs established by the Governor, as well as having utilized security measures that have improved prison safety by reducing inmate-on-staff and inmate-on-inmate violence to record lows; and

Whereas, this year, the Department will posthumously award Specialist Williams its Medal of Honor and bestow the Medal of Merit upon seven current employees while observing the memory of 35 employees who lost their lives as a result of inmate actions, while in the line of duty and service to New York State; nearly three years after the events of September 11, 2001, New Yorkers remain grateful to all members of our law enforcement community who have accepted additional responsibility for the safety of our communities and together achieve this intended goal by strictly upholding the laws of this State and Nation; and

Whereas, as the fifth annual ceremony takes place at the DOCS memorial on the grounds of the Albany Training Academy, it is fitting that New Yorkers remember and commend all correctional employees for performing dangerous and challenging duties with the greatest professionalism and attentiveness to public safety;

Now, Therefore, I, George E. Pataki, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim June 6-12, 2004 as

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES EMPLOYEE WEEK

in the Empire State.



John P. Cahill
Secretary to the Governor

Given under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State
at the Capitol in the City of Albany this twentieth day
of May in the year two thousand four.

George E. Pataki

Governor