Michigan Department of Corrections

2017

Employee Appreciation Banquet

AWARDS
Remembering Agent Candice Dunn

When Oakland County Probation Agent Candice Dunn joined the Michigan Department of Corrections in 2005, she was a college graduate eager to make a difference. That ambition didn’t wane in her 12 years with the department. She encouraged and inspired offenders to change their lives for the better, making herself available to help after hours and on the weekends. She stepped up to volunteer as a mentor and trainer to her colleagues. She didn’t hesitate to give back to those in need in her community. She tackled each challenge with poise and professionalism that made her stand out. Dunn, who was selected as the Michigan Department of Corrections’ 2017 Parole/Probation Agent of the Year, was killed May 9 in a traffic crash in Livingston County. Dunn was travelling home with her family from the MDOC Employee Appreciation Banquet in East Lansing where she was honored for her dedication to helping those under her supervision succeed.

“We are devastated by the loss of Agent Candice Dunn, whose passion for her work changed so many lives for the better,” said Michigan Department of Corrections Director Heidi Washington. “Her ambition and her drive to make Michigan a better and safer place will leave a lasting impact on our department.” Dunn was named the department’s 2017 Agent of the Year in April, and said at the time that she felt humbled to receive the award. During her award acceptance speech at the banquet, she thanked staff across the department for their efforts. “I’m so proud of the work you do, and although I don’t work directly with you, together we are making a brighter, safer and successful community,” she said. “As corrections employees we face difficult challenges every day and I encourage you to use your strengths and abilities to empower and influence others to make Michigan better.” Oakland County Probation Supervisor Heather Wayne, who nominated her for the honor, said she was highly respected by her colleagues and those she supervised. Dunn would help out wherever needed and didn’t seek praise for her actions. “Agent Dunn does not look for recognition for her kindness,” Wayne wrote in her nomination of Dunn. “Her humility is appreciated and respected by her coworkers and management. "She is a leader, a team player, humble and displays excellence, integrity and loyalty at all times." Dunn’s career with the department included work with the Eastern District Probation Office, Troy Probation Office and as a Drug Court Agent in Wayne County.

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Dunn joined the Oakland County Probation Office in Pontiac in December 2015, as an agent overseeing the Urban Drug Court and Sobriety Court programs. Her dedication and investment in offender success was clear through her work in the Urban Drug Court and Sobriety Court Programs, where she encouraged and inspired those she supervised. She said she felt privileged to work with the Urban Drug Court and Sobriety Court and could see the positive change in offenders involved in the programs. “It is our goal that offenders gain control of their lives and stop the cycle of recidivism caused by the darkness of their addiction,” Dunn said in her acceptance speech at the May 9 banquet. “The growth we see in offenders from the beginning of their probation term to the end is not something we can predict. We can only encourage, provide resources and support their self-efficacy. I can say for the first time in 12 years, I’ve written more successful discharges than warrants and that in itself is progress.”

She said she could see the strides the department was making and was eager to see what the future would hold. "Our recidivism rate is significantly lower than the national level and that is because we are recognizing that offender success is not just about decreasing the arrest rate," Dunn said in her speech. "It’s about providing offenders with educational opportunities, helping them change their attitudes and beliefs about crime, addressing substance abuse and mental health issues and instilling employment readiness skills.”

Dunn also recently worked as a trainer in Collaborative Case Management and said being part of the training team opened her to so many new experiences in the department. She was always looking for ways to help the community and regularly made an effort to give back to those less fortunate. She organized the Harvest Gathering fundraiser for the Oakland County Probation Office and her efforts resulted in 58 meals for families in need. Dunn also served as a criminal justice instructor at South University in Novi.

A scholarship has been established in her name for students majoring in criminal justice at Ferris State University, Dunn’s alma mater. For more information on the Candice Dunn Memorial Scholarship Endowment, or to give, click here.

Click here for a tribute video to Agent Candice Dunn.
Two years ago, James Fults was a recent college graduate looking for a career when he heard about a job as an employment counselor with the Michigan Department of Corrections. He landed the role and now helps prisoners paroling from the Vocational Village at Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility land skilled work.

Fults was named the 2017 Director’s Award winner for his tireless efforts to promote the Vocational Village in the business community and help connect paroling prisoners to jobs.

Fults, who also won the department’s Professional Excellence Award, said it was a great honor to receive the recognition.

He said when he took the job he realized his life would become busier, but the work would be rewarding and he likes knowing that his efforts help put offenders on a positive path.

The Vocational Village at Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility prepares prisoners for high-demand jobs in the skilled trades by offering training in carpentry, plumbing, computer numerical control machining, welding, automotive technology and electrical work.

Fults assists in setting up telephone interviews between offenders and prospective employers, delivers career scope programming, prepares workforce development packets and maintains a computerized database for tracking prisoners involved in the vocational trades.

He also helps prepare prisoners for the workforce by conducting mock interviews, teaching resume writing, and helping to establish and support employment goals.

So far, nine prisoners in the Vocational Village have received job offers from employers prior to parole, he said.

Fults said he remembers the first prisoner who received a job offer as a welder following a phone call with an employer and won’t forget his reaction to the news.

He said there was a noticeable change in the prisoner’s face when he realized the job would be waiting for him when he walked out of prison.

"I’m very proud to be part of the Vocational Village," he said.

For a video of the ceremony, visit the MDOC on Facebook.

Photos of the evenings festivities are also on Twitter, or click here to see more photos of the ceremony and honorees on Flickr.
As a new corrections officer, Cary Johnson learned the power of having strong mentors. Now, as a veteran in the department, she is passionate about guiding the next generation of officers.

Johnson, a corrections officer at G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility in Jackson, was named the 2017 Corrections Officer of the Year for her integrity and dedication to public safety. Johnson has been a union leader at G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility since 1997, and is currently the only woman serving on the Michigan Corrections Organization State Executive Board.

The Michigan Correctional Officers’ Training Council, a group comprised of representatives from the MDOC, Michigan Corrections Organization, law enforcement and higher education, chose Johnson for the honor from a pool of five finalists.

Johnson said she was amazed to be selected Corrections Officer of the Year from a group of such outstanding officers.

Johnson also previously received the MDOC’s Lifesaving Award for her efforts to help a prisoner in distress and has been commended for her role as a leader and mentor at her facility.

Johnson has served on the Scholarship, Civil Rights and Mentorship committees for MCO and has participated in the Traumatic Incident Stress Management Team to assist with crisis situations. She is a member of the Training Committee at G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility and has been involved in the Officer Dignity Initiative.

Karolyn Holden is a corrections officer at Oaks Correctional Facility, who joined the department in 1997. She has earned the respect of her colleagues and prisoners. She has served on the EPIC Professional Development team and ran faith-based anger management programming.

John Klapish is a corrections officer at Saginaw Correctional Facility, who began his career in 1986. He is highly regarded by his colleagues, supervisors and prisoners for his integrity. He has been involved in developing components of the Incentives in Segregation program.

Sherlyn Wilson is a corrections officer at Thumb Correctional Facility, who began her career with the department in 2002. She maintains an outstanding positive attitude and professional image, and is viewed by her peers as a leader at the facility.

Phil Allen is a corrections officer at Woodland Center Correctional Facility, who joined the department in 1994. He is a member of the Emergency Response Team, and his wealth of knowledge and experience has been an asset to new officers.

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Corrections Officer of the Year nominees

- Jerald Beard — Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility
- Mark Dudek — Muskegon Correctional Facility
- Jose Enriquez — Cooper Street Correctional Facility
- Brandon Ford — Gus Harrison Correctional Facility
- Deborah Gallagher — Chippewa Correctional Facility
- Terry Grant — Michigan Reformatory
- Mark Gregory — Ionia Correctional Facility
- Jeffrey Grembowski — Absconder Recovery Unit
- Joseph Hammer — Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility
- Siri Heard — Special Alternative Incarceration - Women
- Ronald Hendricks — Transportation
- Joshua Hermann — Earnest C. Brooks Correctional Facility
- Thomas Hertzfeld — Charles E. Egeler Reception and Guidance Center
- John Hill — Marquette Branch Prison
- Valerie Hull — Central Michigan Correctional Facility

- Ryan Jasper — Special Alternative Incarceration - Men
- Kenneth Jewell — Newberry Correctional Facility
- Henry Jones — Detroit Reentry Center
- Michael King — Carson City Correctional Facility
- Jeffrey Lombard — St. Louis Correctional Facility
- Nick Moran — Kinross Correctional Facility
- Gabriel Noble — Macomb Correctional Facility
- Larry Orr — Alger Correctional Facility
- Chad Poynter — Lakeland Correctional Facility
- Justin Prichard — Parnall Correctional Facility
- Shaundrica Roberts — West Shoreline Correctional Facility
- Dwayne Smith — Baraga Correctional Facility
- Eric Stanislawski — Ojibway Correctional Facility
- Frances Stites-Bennett — Detroit Detention Center
- Joseph Voorheis — Lake County Residential Reentry Program
- Scott Wymer — Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility

Parole/Probation Agent of the Year nominees

- Cheryl Evans — Jackson County Parole Office
- Kawana Keys — Detroit Metro Parole Office
- Theresa Krzyzak — Detroit Metro Parole Office
- Brian Mays — Eastern District Parole Office
- Brianne McGill — Chrysler District Probation Office
- Gene McKinstry — Genesee County embedded agent

- Matthew O'Brien — Berrien County embedded agent
- Jacob Poindexter — Isabella County Parole and Probation Office
- Jessica Reuschel — Electronic Monitoring Center
- Travis Rosema — Muskegon County Parole Office
- Russell Ryynanen — Houghton County Parole and Probation Office
Professional Excellence Award winners

Bonnie Angel-Shatrau began her career in 1993 at the Scott Correctional Facility as a food service steward and now works at the Jackson Complex Regional Warehouse as a storekeeper supervisor. Aside from doing an exceptional job in the warehouse, she volunteered to assist with the distribution of resources in Flint from January through October 2016. She helped make sure needs were met, so an estimated 109,000 people had access to the water they needed. Her work allowed the Flint warehouses to deliver 1 million liters of water every week without fail.

Gregory Balcom joined the Muskegon County Parole Office in 2014 and was put in charge of establishing and managing community service projects, at a time when there were not any in place. Within a few months, Balcom was meeting with neighborhood associations to assess needs and organize the clean-up of neighborhoods. By the end of the first summer, 728 hours of community service were completed. He then made new connections with surrounding agencies that allowed another 900 hours of community service to be completed. His unparalleled service and positive attitude is highly respected.

Todd Bechler began his career in 1994 as a Corrections Officer at Gus Harrison Correctional Facility and is currently a member of the MDOC Emergency Management Section. He assisted with managing agency resources to clean up storm debris in Leelanau and Benzie counties and provide water to the citizens of Flint. He has served as a crucial partner to other state, local and federal agencies, and his dedication, willingness to learn, and passion to help others has been key to the department’s success with these missions.

Dewayne Burton started his career with the MDOC in 1988 as a corrections officer at the State Prison of Southern Michigan. He is currently the warden of Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility, where he helped implement the Calvin College Prison Initiative and the Vocational Village. He is directly involved with every aspect of the Vocational Village and is always eager to share its success. He is always working to develop new programs to provide growth to the department and positive opportunities to the inmates.

Melanie Cascaddan joined the MDOC in 2008 as a corrections officer and transferred to the Ingham County Parole Office in 2012. She has worked with the Boys and Girls Club of America for many years, serving on three separate youth committees. She has showed outstanding leadership skills and unmatched commitment to improving the community. She works well with community stakeholders and mentors new agents, as well as youths at the Boys and Girls Club. Her professionalism, integrity and devotion to giving back is highly regarded in the community.
Ken Dimoff has worked as a statistician specialist in the Risk/Classification and Program Evaluation Section of the Office of Research and Planning for more than 25 years. He has used his extraordinary statistical, analytical and computer skills to improve the department's ability to obtain information, analyze it and present it in ways that are informative and credible. His work has enabled the department to quickly respond to information requests, assess programs and conduct data-driven planning. He has demonstrated tremendous initiative and is constantly acquiring new knowledge and skills.

Adrian Dirschell is a 21-year veteran of the MDOC who currently works as chaplain at Charles E. Egeler Reception & Guidance Center. He has been instrumental to the establishment of the Hospice Program at the facility and created the “On Eagles Wings” therapeutic group. Dirschell is a great humanitarian and is highly respected by his peers for his honesty, integrity and professionalism.

Holly Estapa began her career as a corrections officer in 2006 and transferred to the Troy Probation Office in 2010 as a gender specific caseload agent. She has been a positive influence in the lives of those she supervises and probationers have thanked her for her help and guidance. Estapa also recently helped a probationer leave a dangerous living situation. She has received accolades for her positive attitude, diligence and hard work, and her honesty and integrity are well-respected.

Elizabeth Goniea began her career with the department in 2000 holding various positions in records and time computation. In 2015, she became a department specialist with the Automated Data Systems Section. Her work with the Legacy Modernization Project has been outstanding and she has been instrumental in providing guidance on a multitude of ADSS maintenance issues. She has served as a resource to many other MDOC departments, assisting them in troubleshooting issues and discussing options for development.

Michelle Horton started her career in 1988 as a registered nurse and now serves as assistant health services administrator. She is constantly striving to standardize clinical operations and identify opportunities to make positive changes. She is very involved in multiple committees representing the needs of healthcare, and has taken on additional responsibilities from overseeing northern region operations to providing statewide oversight for clinic operations. Her leadership and work ethic has helped build a strong team in the Bureau of Health Care Services.
Professional Excellence Award winners

Kathy Keiffer is a 24-year veteran of the MDOC, with experience at facility level and at central office. She shows an exemplary work ethic and her willingness to go the extra mile has been recognized by colleagues, as well as others outside the department. Her professionalism and dedication has been recognized by the Office of Good Government as well as many other teams that had important objectives to accomplish to help the department succeed. Her positive, upbeat attitude is contagious and she is an invaluable asset to the department.

Robert Kinney is a maintenance mechanic at Jackson Complex who began his career with the MDOC in 1995 as a corrections officer. He volunteered to help in Flint in 2016 and went door-to-door with National Guard members and other state employees to make sure residents were receiving water, filters and test kits. He was assigned to serve as the fleet manager at the state’s distribution warehouse in Flint, where he was responsible for inspecting, accounting, and training personnel to operate the rented fleet of trucks, as well as any other machinery on the premises.

Linsey LaMontagne has been with MDOC for 16 years, starting her career as an officer at the Florence Crane Correctional Facility. In 2012, she became the manager of the Office of Community Corrections and has maintained a positive attitude during the transformational changes the office is experiencing. She has maintained a high level of professionalism in her work, and her tireless efforts to promote offender success will have a positive impact for years to come.

Amy Moore started her career in the Office of Parole Board in 1996 as a word processing assistant, and she is currently the manager of the Lifer/Litigation Unit. Moore is a highly devoted and dedicated member of the management team and Parole Board Efficiency Team. As a strong and competent leader, she uses her wealth of knowledge to share information and seeks to eliminate obstacles where they exist. Moore is extremely efficient and routinely offers assistance to others in the workplace. She always looks out for the best interest of MDOC, crime victims and her colleagues.

Kelly Roark is a 22-year veteran of the MDOC, who spent most of his career at the Gus Harrison Correctional Facility. He now works as a lead analyst for the Automated Data Systems Section. Roark routinely demonstrates a high level of customer service and is responsible for assisting staff with application issues and providing training on enterprise data systems. Roark was tremendously helpful in implementing technical solutions for Facility Formal Count and Overtime Equalization. He was quick to schedule visits and help resolve any issues at facilities and remained dedicated to ensuring all problems were resolved.
Janella Robinson is a region manager in the Field Operations Administration Metro Territory and has done an outstanding job promoting offender success in the Wayne and Oakland counties through her previous work in Reentry. She has developed partnerships with community organizations and created a workforce development program called Job Connect, where she works with offenders to update resumes and help set up future employment opportunities. Her efforts in workforce development resulted in a successful partnership with Sakthi Automotive to provide employment opportunities to offenders.

Mark Schultz is a master licensed electrician at Saginaw Correctional Facility who joined the MDOC in 1988. He has demonstrated outstanding job performance throughout his career. Schultz is a go-to employee for any security system issues and never hesitates to travel to any facility to correct problems. He has also developed enhancements to facility security systems that allow it to catch future failures and run more efficiently. He is always looking to help wherever he is needed and never does anything short of an exceptional job.

Bridget Spencer began her career with the department in 1995 as a corrections officer and she is currently the human resource developer for Thumb Correctional Facility. She is a veteran of the United States Army, and is a master trainer for the Emergency Response Team, Corrections Officer Academy, Youthful Offender Program and New Employee School. In 2016, she was asked to assist the residents of Flint and has spent more than 3,000 hours helping provide water to the city’s citizens. She is a true leader, who has represented the department at the highest level.

Brent Travelbee joined the MDOC in 1992 as a corrections officer at Gus Harrison Correctional Facility, and now works in Emergency Management as a State Administrative Manager. He is devoted to improving the overall emergency preparedness for the MDOC. He has established an Intelligence Unit, manages the state’s Emergency Response Team, and coordinates ERT training. He also was heavily involved in the State Emergency Operations Center in Flint. He is always professional, prepared, confident and knowledgeable in his field.

Sarah Valade started her career in 2005 as a probation agent in the Eastern District Probation Office and currently oversees the RSAT/ASAT program at the Detroit Reentry Center. She has an unmatched work ethic and has demonstrated tremendous leadership skills. She has been a positive influence on employee engagement and makes an extra effort to spend time with staff and educate them on the goals and mission of the Detroit Reentry Center. Her excellent communication and leadership skills have led to many other agents looking up to her as a role model.

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Thank you to everyone who made the year a success

This year's awards ceremony honored employees from across the state for their hard work and contributions to the department's success. The department experienced a number of notable achievements in the last year, including increased employee engagement and the success of its Vocational Village. Recidivism also declined to 29.8 percent, which is among the lowest in the nation. Those successes would not be possible without the dedication of all of the department's employees.

More than 400 people attended the Employee Appreciation Banquet and awards ceremony at the Kellogg Hotel and Conference Center in East Lansing. Many attendees were friends, family or colleagues of the nearly 70 award winners and nominees. Lieutenant Gov. Brian Calley kicked off the ceremony by thanking department employees for their efforts to keep Michigan's citizens safe. Greg Straub, administrative assistant for the Field Operations Administration, served as the master of ceremonies for the evening. Dion Laing, chaplain at G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility, gave the invocation and Quenton Pannell, supervisor at the Electronic Monitoring Center, sang the national anthem. Awards were presented by Director Heidi Washington, Deputy Directors Russ Marlan, Ken McKee and Jeri-Ann Sherry, and Michigan Corrections Organization President Tom Tylutki. Congratulations and best wishes to all the winners and finalists.