NEWS RELEASE
DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION
Commissioner Claire DeMatteis

Presented by Jason P. Miller, Chief of Communications and Community Relations
245 McKee Road | Dover, DE 19904 | Office: 302.857.5232 | jason.miller@delaware.gov

Department of Correction announces annual recognition awards honoring staff for exceptional service

Dover, DE – As the Delaware Department of Correction commemorates Correctional Officers and Employees Week, May 3 - 9, Commissioner Claire DeMatteis today announced that several DOC staff members are being recognized with annual Departmental awards and statewide awards for providing service above and beyond the call of duty during 2019.

“It takes a special person to work in corrections, and the Delaware Department of Correction is served by more than 2,000 dedicated professionals who employ a combination of skill, passion and perseverance to support our dual mission of public safety and offender rehabilitation,” Commissioner DeMatteis said. “It is my honor to recognize some of our most dedicated employees who have made an extraordinary impact on our Department and the communities we serve during the past year. Congratulations to each one of you and thank you for your service.”

DOC employees who are being recognized with annual awards are as follows:

2019 Commissioner’s Award for Heroism and Recipient of the 2019 Delaware Award for Heroism: Corporal Christopher Camacho, James T. Vaughn Correctional Center

On July 27, 2019, Corporal Camacho and his son were driving on a Dover-area roadway when they came across an accident involving a vehicle that had flipped off the road and into a deep ditch. Cpl. Camacho, who was first on the scene, observed that the vehicle was beginning to smoke. With the assistance of another motorist, he carefully removed the injured driver from the vehicle and remained on the scene until emergency care was provided by first responders. Corporal Camacho was subsequently recognized for his courage and service to the community by Governor John Carney during a bill signing at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center.

Corporal Camacho will be presented with the prestigious Delaware Heroism Award and the Commissioner’s Heroism Award during the DOC Award Ceremony on October 8. Additionally, Cpl. Camacho was nominated by Commissioner DeMatteis for the State Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service.
2019 Employee of the Year: Mary Skaats, Victim Services Advocate, Hares Corner Probation & Parole

Mary Skaats assists New Castle County Probation and Parole Domestic Violence Officers by engaging with victims of crime, providing them with critical information, assisting them in obtaining Protection From Abuse Orders and other civil orders, and accompanying them to court proceedings. During one three-month period of 2019, Mary contacted 85 victims, providing safety planning information to 83 of these individuals and maintaining follow-up contact with nearly half of these individuals. The assistance that she provides is critical to effective supervision efforts by Officers and helps to ensure that victims have access to needed resources. Mary also represents the DOC on various working groups and victim services organizations. These include the Sexual Assault Network of Delaware, where she serves as co-chair, the Joint Victim Services Task Force, the Human Trafficking Interagency Coordinating Council, and the Victim Rights Task Force. Her involvement and leadership within these organizations has allowed her to apply the concepts and values of trauma-informed care to her daily work.

Mary will be recognized for her service during the DOC Award Ceremony on October 8.

2019 Correctional Officer of the Year: Staff Lieutenant Sonia Sessoms, Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution

Staff Lieutenant Sessoms handles a wide variety of administrative functions and serves as the Institutional Training Administrator, Scheduling Officer, Facility Investigator, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Compliance Manager, and Cosmetology Supervisor. Staff Lieutenant Sessoms is a subject matter expert in all areas of responsibility and works tirelessly to ensure that staff receives training to obtain and maintain necessary certifications to complete their tasks and enhance their professional development. As the facility scheduler, she works with the Warden and his team to ensure the facility is properly staffed at all times to ensure overall operational safety and security. Staff Lieutenant Sessoms conducts a variety of investigations, including more than a dozen PREA investigations alone during one recent year. She routinely volunteers to cover as a Shift Commander, allowing fellow staff to take much needed time off and has been entrusted with additional administrative responsibilities as a result of her commitment and diligence.

Staff Lieutenant Sessoms will be honored for her dedicated service during the DOC award ceremony on October 8. Additionally, Staff Lt. Sessoms was also nominated by Commissioner DeMatteis for the State Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service.

2019 Probation & Parole Officer of the Year and Recipient of the 2019 Delaware Heroism Award: Senior Probation Officer Joshua Churchill, Sussex County Probation & Parole

In March, 2019, Officer Churchill was assigned to the Sussex County Governor’s Task Force in the area of Long Neck/Oak Orchard when a call was received for a suspected overdose near Millsboro. Officer Churchill and his partner realized that they were the closest unit to this
emergency and immediately responded to the scene. They located the victim who was unconscious and unresponsive from an apparent overdose. Officer Churchill employed multiple doses of Naloxone, which resulted in signs of improvement by the patient before EMS arrived and continued care. Without the prompt response and effective intervention by Officer Churchill another life may have been lost to overdose.

Senior Probation Officer Churchill will be honored for his outstanding service to the Department and will receive the prestigious Delaware Heroism Award during the DOC award ceremony on October 8. Additionally, Senior Probation Officer Churchill was also nominated by Commissioner DeMatteis for the State Award for Excellence and Commitment in State Service.

2019 Team of the Year: Alexa Fausey, Administrative Specialist, Erin Sebastian, Management Analyst, Diane Pierce, Administrative Accounting, Bureau of Community Corrections, Central Administration Building

Erin, Diane, and Alexa have been selected for their extraordinary contributions to the Bureau of Community Corrections. Each one provides invaluable support to Bureau of Community Corrections leadership and staff, which numbers more than 500 employees, contract workers, treatment providers, and volunteers. Erin, Diane and Alexa demonstrate outstanding work ethic and performance that far exceeds expectations and exhibit a talent for organizing and prioritizing, highly developed interpersonal skills, and a strong sense of dedication as they interact with staff, representatives from multiple agencies, vendors, and the public. Erin, Diane, and Alexa are valued for their daily work managing budgets, vendor contracts, supporting Taser and EPICS implementation and training, daily administrative support and their willingness to seek out and complete additional responsibilities.

The 2019 Team of the Year will be honored during the DOC award ceremony on October 8.

Additionally, Commissioner DeMatteis recognized the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) Building 20 Expansion Team with a nomination for the Governor’s Award for Excellence.

This team was established to advance the DOC’s efforts to better serve the JTVCC maximum security offender population. It consists of representatives from the central DOC administration, Bureau of Correctional Healthcare, JTVCC, Delaware Department of Education, and DOC’s contract healthcare vendor. The team worked diligently to secure funding and managed construction of an expansion of Building 20 in the Security Housing Unit, which added 4,500 square feet of group programming space for mental health programs, educational classes, and expanded treatment opportunities. Educating offenders, addressing mental health challenges, and providing treatment and growth opportunities have a significant impact on their quality of life for inmates and supports the DOC’s reentry initiatives.

-END-