Director's Message

The Department recently received a unique honor. During the Governor's State of the Commonwealth address on January 9, Governor Northam announced that VADOC registered, for the third consecutive year, the lowest recidivism rate in the nation. He honored the Department by praising our hard work and acknowledging our reentry programs. During his hour-long speech, Governor Northam highlighted his most important points by recognizing five people, each representing a success story. The first four were involved in economic growth, expanded health care, sustainability and substance abuse treatment.

The fifth recognized criminal justice – specifically, the continued low recidivism rate of the Virginia Department of Corrections.

It was my great honor to stand and represent you before the General Assembly. This was a special moment, and I wouldn't have been there if you all weren't working tremendously hard to make this Department such a success.

All Virginians watching the live, televised broadcast learned of our success in public safety. VADOC was the only state agency so recognized that night. You may read the speech here, and watch it here.

A few days later, several VADOC personnel travelled to the national ACA conference. There, the Department was again on display as corrections professionals from around the country learned about VADOC's innovative efforts in gang management, sustainability, inmate management, and reentry.

This newsletter introduces you to three of the many people behind our success. Each, in his or her own way, brings a special contribution: positive outlook, versatility, commitment to the job. All commit themselves to our mission – enhancing public safety by helping people be better. This is what makes us a unique agency. This – our people – is why we gain the spotlight and receive accolades.

Let me again thank you for all that you do to help this agency as we walk forward together.

Harold Clarke

VADOC Maintains Lowest Recidivism Rate in the Nation

Governor Ralph Northam announced during the State of the Commonwealth address that for the third year in a row, Virginia’s re-incarceration rate is the lowest in the country.

The VADOC was approved to work with members of the General Assembly to introduce legislation important to the agency.

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In his State of the Commonwealth address delivered January 9, Governor Ralph Northam announced that Virginia holds the lowest recidivism rate in the nation for the third consecutive year. The packed General Assembly responded by interrupting the Governor’s address with a standing ovation.

The announcement came late in Governor Northam’s speech as he launched into a discussion of criminal justice reform.

After noting the low recidivism rate, Governor Northam recognized Director Harold Clarke, who stood and waved as the audience again offered a standing ovation.

Director Clarke was the only agency director recognized during the address and one of only five guests acknowledged during the hour-long speech.

The Governor’s state of the Commonwealth speech traditionally marks the start of the General Assembly session that this year runs into late February.
Governor Ralph Northam announced during the State of the Commonwealth address that for the third year in a row, Virginia’s re-incarceration rate is the lowest in the country. Virginia’s latest recidivism rate is 23.4 percent. Of the 43 states reporting 3-year recidivism rates (the number of offenders who are re-incarcerated within three years of their release from prison), the Virginia DOC’s rate of 23.4% is the lowest in the country.

“Virginia’s latest recidivism numbers are the result of a lot of hard work on the part of both the Department of Corrections and the incarcerated offenders,” said Governor Northam. “I want to thank Director Harold Clarke for his department’s work to make sure we do as much as possible to prepare people to leave our corrections system and rebuild their lives.”

Last year’s rate was 22.4%. Between last year and this year, the percentage of offenders returning for technical violations more than doubled. Increases in technical violations may be associated with a response to the opioid epidemic; some judges sentence opioid users to state-responsible incarceration for their safety and treatment.

“We are returning offenders to their communities equipped to be law-abiding citizens who contribute to their neighborhoods and families,” said Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security Brian Moran. “This is a bipartisan accomplishment and we look forward to working together to continue investing in critical re-entry efforts.”

The groups with the lowest recidivism rates consist of those offenders who served their time in DOC facilities, as opposed to local jails, and had no known mental impairment and no history of opioid abuse. (Limitations in capacity in DOC facilities means some state responsible offenders serve their entire incarceration in a local or regional jail.) The recidivism rate for those in DOC facilities with no history of opioid abuse and no mental illness is 17.3 percent.

“Reentry work begins the day we receive an offender,” said Virginia Department of Corrections Director Harold Clarke. “Our mission is to help people be better, and the evidence shows we’re doing that inside the prisons as well as in the community once offenders are out on probation and parole.”

Like most states, Virginia counts its official recidivism rate as the percentage of offenders who return to state responsible incarceration within three years of being released. The rate was calculated by following offenders released to the community in 2014 for three years. Of the 12,021 offenders released from incarceration in Virginia in fiscal year 2014, 2,815 were re-incarcerated within three years.

“Virginia’s latest recidivism numbers are the result of a lot of hard work on the part of both the Department of Corrections and the incarcerated offenders.”

Virginia Governor Ralph Northam
The VADOC was approved to work with members of the General Assembly to introduce legislation important to the agency. This year, the following bill was introduced and is moving along in the process:

House Bill (HB) 2605, a bill to replace Detention and Diversion programs language in the Code of Virginia with the Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP), which was implemented in 2017.

The VADOC has transformed its detention and diversion center programs through the development of CCAP, designed based on researched strategies and evidence-based practices demonstrated to reduce recidivism.

The CCAP programs include education, vocational training, and specialized intensive substance abuse treatment to address the opioid epidemic.

There have been bills introduced by legislators that have a direct impact on the Department, such as data collection and reporting requirements around the Department’s use of Restricted Housing, the procurement of goods made by VCE, and access to offender health records.

The 2018 General Assembly is a 45-day, or “short” session and runs from January 9-February 23, 2019.
Getting to Know VADOC: State Farm Correctional Complex-Asean Lundy

What they say: Asean Lundy’s supervisors offer high praise for the State Farm Complex Employee of the Year.

“Asean Lundy represents the very best of our VADOC values in both his role as a Lieutenant at Deep Meadow Correctional Center and as the State Farm Healing Environment Ambassador. Mr. Lundy brings positive energy and commitment to our mission every day, making our institutions a better and safer place to be.”

Warden Thomas Meyer

Asean Lundy serves at State Farm Correctional Complex in multiple roles. He is an Operations Lieutenant for B-Break and assists in running of the shift. He is a Healing Environment Ambassador. He is a Subject Matter Specialist, a Dialogue Practitioner, a Circle Lead Facilitator, and a TOT (Trainer of Trainers) in T4C.

Recent accolades: State Farm’s Employee of the Year

How did you get into corrections?
I needed some stability for my new family so that I could provide for them. I was 18 years of age at that time and applied for the job and got hired.

Why do you stay in corrections?
I liked the stability and the opportunities to grow. The Department has a lot of avenues one can take to perfect their craft. I love the leadership we have at State Farm Complex that pushes individuals to grow and excel in what they do.

What keeps you coming back?
Being part of the Healing Environment by making people better is one of the major reasons why I keep coming back.

How have things changed over the years for you and the Department?
I started as a Corrections Officer at Greensville Correctional Center in 2003, and in 2011, I became one of the first Treatment Officers along with two others. I stayed at GRCC until 2014 when I moved to what is now State Farm. I’ve received promotions and last year I received the Director’s Award for the Healing Environment, and also I received Employee of the Year. So I know if you work hard and play your role in the mission, it will pay off for anyone who believes that they can achieve their goals.
Getting to Know VADOC: Caroline Correctional Unit - April Spencer

April Spencer serves at Caroline Correction Unit #2 in multiple roles: She is an Administrative Lieutenant and a Hearings Officer. She often deals with matters related to ACA and PREA accreditation.

**Recent accolades:** Caroline Correctional Unit’s Employee of the Year

**How did you get into corrections?**
When my husband got out of the military we moved back to Virginia in 1989, and I was looking to start a new career. I applied for Corrections Officer at Sussex 2 State Prison.

**Why do you stay in corrections?**
I like working with the staff. I also like the direction the Department is going into.

**What keeps you coming back?**
The younger staff and my ability to help direct their careers.

**How have things changed over the years for you and the Department?**
When I came into the Department it seems as if the Department wanted to just incarcerate prisoners and keep them locked up for as long as they could. I feel that at that time in my career I felt the same way.

I feel now that the Department has changed and this has also helped many Department staff members’ way of thinking. Now I feel that reentry is the only way that the offender and the reentry committee will become more productive.

What they say: Lt. Spencer’s supervisors offer high praise for Caroline Correctional Unit’s Employee of the Year.

“Lt. Spencer is the definition of support. She promotes the mission, vision and values of the Department, which plays a fundamental role in the development of the staff and offenders. She is a team player always willing to assist whenever and wherever needed. While voicing, reinforcing, challenging, and promoting accountability. Lt. Spencer is the go to person here at CCU2!”

Superintendent James White
Getting to Know VADOC: Wise Correctional Unit - David Dupuie

Officer David Dupuie serves at Wise Correctional Unit #18 as a correctional officer. He “never does the same thing.” Officer Dupuie often works with road crews and helps coordinate inmates involved in the numerous community projects Wise Correctional Unit has facilitated over the years. He’s known for his reliability, working well with his fellow staff and helping Unit #18 to achieve its mission.

**Recent accolades:** Wise Correctional Unit’s Employee of the Year

**How did you get into corrections?**
I was looking for a reliable job that would provide for my family after working in the furniture factory. I have now been with the state for 20 years, and I am approaching retirement. The last four years have been the best of my career at Camp 18.

**Why do you stay in corrections?**
The 1st and 16th has been faithful to me, my benefits, the people I work with and Camp 18. I work with some of the best people; Camp 18 is a work family.

**What keeps you coming back?**
Being part of the Healing Environment by making people better is one of the major reasons why I keep coming back.

**How have things changed over the years for you and the Department?**
Camp 18 is a fun place to work and I don’t dread going to work. We love to eat, and I work with seasoned officers. The majority of the officers here have 10 years or more of experience with a good percentage of them having over 20 years now. Also, I enjoy working with the inmates at Camp 18 on road crews and community projects.
Because We Care: Package Drive for the Virginia National Guard

The Because We Care Package Drive offered an opportunity for state employees and legislators to donate items and write letters for soldiers of the Virginia National Guard 529th Combat Sustainment Support Battalion serving in the Middle East. More than 70 soldiers from the Virginia Beach-based battalion plan and provide logistics for U.S. and coalition forces in the Central Command area as part of Operation Inherent Resolve.

The Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs collected goods from Wednesday, January 23 through Friday, January 25. At left, Lu Davis shows off a part of the collection made at VADOC Headquarters. The Southern States Correctional Association also participated in the drive, as did many others around the state. The picture, right, shows the total collected items. Photo courtesy of the Office of the Secretary of Veterans and Defense Affairs.
Recovery Support Navigator, Jackie L. Bruce of District 1 Probation and Parole, Richmond, recently visited Chesterfield Women’s Detention and Diversion Center/Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP) to share information on a new substance abuse program to fight the opioid epidemic.

Ms. Bruce’s January 17 visit informed offenders about the Medication Assisted Treatment Reentry Initiative (MATRI), a program designed to provide pre-release treatment and post-release referral, treatment and support for opioid-addicted offenders. Approximately 162 offenders heard Ms. Bruce’s presentation.

“The probationers were very engaged and receptive to information shared by Jackie Bruce. They had an opportunity to ask questions regarding side effects, cost, and location availability,” said Chesterfield CCAP Superintendent Joycetine Boone.

Before participating offenders return to their communities, they receive naltrexone that prevents the euphoric effects of opioids and reduces cravings for drugs. Participation is voluntary and the injections are effective for 28 days.

The MATRI program is available to offenders transitioning to three areas known for their opioid problems – Richmond City, Norfolk City and the counties of Buchanan and Tazewell. The program is sometimes called the Vivitrol program, for the trade name of the naltrexone the program uses.

Participants are being identified and selected from Intensive Therapeutic Communities in five pilot sites. Besides Chesterfield Diversion and Detention CCAP, two other CCAPs are involved: Cold Springs Detention and Diversion Center, and Appalachian Detention and Diversion Center. Two prisons are also participating, Indian Creek Correctional Center and Virginia Correctional Center for Women.
The Virginia Department of Corrections sent several people to ACA National Convention held in New Orleans in mid-January.

Virginians presented several workshops, including: “How the Virginia Department of Corrections Manages Gangs,” “Helping Offenders Restore their Driving Privileges: A Collaborative Approach that Enhances Re-entry,” “How the Built Environment Can Best Support Rehabilitative Programs in the Criminal Justice Context,” “How to Comply with OSHA Hazardous Chemical Requirements,” and “Going from Good to Great: Effects of Compassion Fatigue in Correction Professionals.”

Clockwise from upper left: Randy Rollins of Drive to Work; SP-SHS Brian Moran, center, with several VADOC employees past and present; Mike Duke; Dr. Jennifer Jennings; and Marcus Elam with a conference attendee.
Coffeewood Raises Money to Support Polar Plunge

On January 22, Coffeewood played the Culpeper Sheriff’s Department, the Madison Rescue Squad and the EVOLVE Center. Players donated $10 each to play and raised $200 for the Polar Plunge, an event to benefit Special Olympics Virginia.

Additionally, CWCC held a Spirit Night at Culpeper Buffalo Wild Wings on Saturday, January 19 to raise money for the Polar Plunge. The effort raised approximately $150 for the Plunge.
On January 19, a visitor to River North CC attempted to bring drugs into the prison by hiding them in her genitalia. On January 27, a visitor to Augusta CC attempted to smuggle Suboxone strips into the facility, also hiding them in her genitalia. Both visitors were arrested. To see the related tweet, click here.

Caroline Correctional Unit launched its USDA grant funded compost program; 1 of 19 new compost project sites. CCU will divert approximately 50 pounds of food per day from a landfill and use the finished product to grow more greenhouse produce. See the related tweet here.

VADOC’s Greensville Correctional Center hosted former offenders & family members for a panel discussion. To see more, click here.
Virginia Department Of Corrections Launches The Building Family Bridges Project For Offenders With Minor Children: On November 19, 2018, the Virginia Department of Corrections (VADOC) launched the “Building Family Bridges” project for offenders with minor children.

COD, Jan. 7, 2019: VDOC believes in second chances for all offenders: Virginia is a national leader in limiting the use of restrictive housing, and we’re incredibly proud of the hard work that has made that happen.

Gov. Northam: Virginia Maintains Lowest Recidivism Rate in the Country: Governor Ralph Northam announced during last night’s State of the Commonwealth address that for the third year in a row, Virginia’s re-incarceration rate is the lowest in the country. The recidivism rate is 23.4 percent.

Bill would exempt mentally ill from death penalty: A Senate committee has agreed to advance a bill that would protect individuals with a severe mental illness from the receiving the death penalty.

From the Archives: Virginia State Prison Farm: The Virginia State Farm Prison was located on over 4,000 acres of land on both sides of the James River in Goochland and Powhatan Counties. The facility opened in the 1890s.

Two bills would allow Virginia inmates sentenced by misinformed jurors a chance at parole: In 1999, jurors recommended Jerome Cooper serve 70 years in prison for murder. But after his trial, one of the jurors wrote to the judge.

Leaders, residents honored for giving back to community: The annual Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration at First Baptist Church celebrated service. Dr. Wendy Lyle-Jones, a principal for the Virginia Department of Corrections, was guest speaker for the celebration.

Innocent man wrongly sent to prison for 33 years pitches lawmakers on ‘junk science’ bill: A bill aimed at helping innocent people wrongfully convicted by flawed forensic science advanced in the General Assembly last week with the help of a man who knows all about the problem.

Do you have a story idea for the newsletter (or IDOC)? Please contact Win Sisson at george.sisson@vadoc.virginia.gov or call (804) 887-8072.