Much has been written about the challenges presented by the growing number of people being released to the streets from the Massachusetts prison system and the Massachusetts Parole Board. Most newspaper articles and talk shows address one or more of the issues related to a person's return to the community after a stint in prison. These works stress singularly, or in combination, the importance of pre-treatment, cognitive-behavioral interventions, community partnerships, family involvement, graduated responses to parole violations, and swift and certain responses to parole behavior. This agency has poised itself in the last year to broaden its scope by developing partnerships and relationships that will help us make a significant impact in the differences we make in our community. I believe the community partners we have engaged, as well other state and local agencies, have helped us to achieve success with reintegrating individuals back into society.

I hope in some small measure this newsletter, and its future editions, can demonstrate the hard work that goes into a very complicated process of risk assessment and risk management. The challenge sometimes gets lost in translation when a story related to the work we do, is misunderstood and represented in a light that is less than favorable. My hope is to make available the story of the people in this agency that do their best to make a difference in some small way, everyday. One of the main purposes of this newsletter is to inform our readers about what we do and tell them a story about how we go about the business of reentry. As Chairman of the Parole Board, I want to welcome you to another great edition of our newsletter, and I hope you will continue to examine and explore with us this journey of parole and reintegration.

Welcome from Mark A. Conrad
Chairman of the Massachusetts Parole Board

We are on the web! Please visit us at www.mass.gov/parole
“I have been a long time believer that everyone needs help in the right direction.”

Winston Churchill, Master Statesman, once stated, “All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, duty, mercy, hope.” A short time ago I had the privilege of attending the first graduation of the Step Forward Program, which is one of the agency’s 23 ongoing initiatives that we have been working on this past year. The ceremony included our first parolee graduate and was an inspirational opportunity to witness firsthand the hope these new graduates have for a better future. The Step Forward Program has gained the attention of Governor Deval Patrick because of its innovative ways in collaboration with recognized and award winning programs.

This initiative is creative and helps us to work along with Community Servings, a non-profit organization in Jamaica Plain which provides meals to terminally ill people in the Boston-metro area. This unique and innovative program provides a volunteer training program for unemployed parolees. Parolees have the opportunity to gain valuable skills and experience while providing Community Servings with an additional source of volunteers to help prepare and package the 377,000 meals delivered to clients each year. Through Community Servings, parolee interns are required to volunteer for a total of 30 hours. After successfully completing the 30 hours, parolees qualify for vouchers to take courses at Bunker Hill Community College. Some of these parolees are admitted to Community Servings’ 12-week job training program, which will lead to full-time employment in the food industry. The recent parolee graduate successfully completed this program and is currently preparing to enroll in classes at Bunker Hill Community College and we look forward to his continued progress.

I have been a long time believer that everyone needs help in the right direction. Stories like these should resonate with us in the criminal justice profession because it shows how the system of justice works. This individual is a client of the Parole Board, but he is also a product of our system which shows how rehabilitation can work. Why can’t we demonstrate that by understanding that we must help ex-offenders with their reintegration plans once they are released back into society and by doing so, we are improving public safety.

I certainly think we can, and have already established this conduit by working with non-profit organizations like Community Servings, and other partners along the way. In the business of criminal justice if we left out the word justice, and referenced people as criminals, than we would be correct. However justice, according to Webster’s Dictionary, is defined as “the maintenance or administration of what is just especially by the impartial adjustment of conflicting claims or the assignment of merited rewards or punishments” and, “the quality of being just, impartial, or fair.”

How much more morally right can we be as a society that is swift in our judgment, but fair in our sentencing and be morally righteous in our path to extend help to those whom have humbled themselves to work hard and learn from their mistakes. An unknown author once said, “There are risks and costs to a program of action. But they are far less than the long range risks and costs of comfortable inaction.” For the sake of those we are responsible for providing services, victims or their surviving family members, the community at large and others that are alike and whom we serve, we must always take action!
For this edition of Parole News, I had the pleasure of interviewing Sheila Brothers, Word Processing Operator at MCI Cedar Junction. Sheila is a warm and open woman, who had so many fun stories to share with me. It was easy to see why Marcia Hill, Deputy Chief of Transitional Services, when asked about Sheila quickly replied, “We don’t want Sheila to ever retire...She is an agency historian who fully comprehends processes and procedures- and she always keeps me focused on the tasks at hand!”

Sheila has worked for the Parole Board since 1986, and all of her 23 years have been spent at MCI Cedar Junction. “I have been familiar with the Department of Correction (DOC) and Parole staff here at Cedar Junction for years, and that is very settling for me,” Sheila quoted. Sheila also worked for the DOC in Records before coming to Parole. Interestingly enough she even had to go through the Department’s Boot Camp before she was able to accept the position in Records. According to Sheila, “Back in those days all DOC employees (even clerical) had to go through a 4-week Boot Camp program.” “I had to participate in an obstacle course set up by the National Guard and run the perimeter of MCI Cedar Junction five days a week...I was even put in a maze, sprayed with tear gas and then told to find my way out!” Sheila explained that it is no longer DOC practice for all employees to attend this training (only correctional officers), yet, “This will always be an accomplishment in my life that I am very proud of.”

A typical day for Sheila at high-paced Cedar Junction consists of entering commitments into SPIRIT, dealing with any DOC inmate date changes (i.e. good time), releasing transfers in SPIRIT and helping out the Board or hearing examiners who may came in for parole violator hearings. “What I enjoy about my position is the interesting work that I do, the cases I see and that there’s never a dull moment.” Sheila is also responsible for making sure inmates receive their parole package, entering Board votes in SPIRIT and assigning home plan reviews to field parole officers when necessary. “I also assemble my institution’s monthly Victim Access Hearing’s list...This is an important piece of my job as to ensure the agency’s Victim Services Unit is able to process these hearings against any possible related victims.”

I asked Sheila, aka “agency historian,” what she views as the agency’s major accomplishments over the past two decades and without hesitation she spoke of the agency’s client tracking database, SPIRIT, and of the Regional Reentry Centers (RRC’s)/current reentry process. “When I first started with the agency I had to track-offender information on index cards, so the use of SPIRIT and what the database can do for you is simply amazing...And as for our current reentry process, it is nice to see that more services and programs are available for parolees and ex-offenders...Ex-offenders are now driven to Parole’s RRC’s and offered help on the day of release from prison, whereas before ex-offenders where shown the door and walked down the Cedar Junction driveway into the unknown on their last day.”

When Sheila’s not busy at Cedar Junction, or participating in any obstacle courses, you will most likely find her at home surrounded by her family and golden retriever, Riley. “I love dogs, especially golden retrievers, and spend much of my spare time raising money and participating in ASPCA events (The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)...I support this organization nationwide, and participate in their yearly walk in Hudson, MA.” Besides her love for golden retrievers, Sheila spoke to me at length about her loving husband, two amazing daughters and adorable 18-month old grandson, or as Sheila refers to him, “My Bubba.” It was not hard to see where her passion for life lies, “With my family,” she said, in between the occasional sharing of her family photos with me. Sheila also enjoys reading and traveling to Las Vegas, “I am not really a gambler, but I go for the shows, pools, shopping and just the overall vitality Las Vegas has to offer.”
Much has been written recently about the agency’s academic collaborations with local universities such as Northeastern and the University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Boston. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you one project in particular— a parolee satisfaction survey that is currently underway with UMASS Applied Sociology graduate students. The goal of the survey is to understand what programs and services are beneficial to parolees. Chairman Conrad also traveled to UMASS on February 23rd to meet and speak with the graduate students who will be conducting this research.

The following article was taken from the Newsletter of the Graduate Program in Applied Sociology, Spring 2010 edition.

First year students doing Applied Sociology: Massachusetts Parole Project—Edmund Melia

The fall 2009 Foundations of Applied Sociology course (and next semester’s Methods I course) is conducting a research study in collaboration with the Massachusetts Parole Board. This study is being conducted under the guidance and mentorship of Dr. Hartwell and Dr. Deng.

The goal is to understand what programs and services are most beneficial to parolees, and to determine what programs and services are lacking. Two major aims of this study are to improve the re-integration process for parolees, and to reduce recidivism. The results of this study have a strong potential to benefit the state, the parolees, and the community. The results will be presented to the MA Parole Board and it is both their and our aim to implement the results. The existing literature in this area is seriously lacking. Both the Applied Sociology program and the Massachusetts Parole Board would like to see this study serve as a national model for improving the re-integration process for parolees. Thus far, students have written a document that has been submitted to the Parole Board, which introduces our project, reviews the current literature, and provides an outline of the methods for the study. We have also submitted our initial application to the IRB. In addition, several students have submitted proposals to Wal-Mart, the GSA, Subway Restaurants, and Dunkin Donuts to secure funding for gift cards for the project. At this stage, the bulk of the planning and research has been conducted and the goals for next semester are to carry out the study, analyze the data we collect, and report our findings to the Parole Board.

Parole has also generated and executed a Memorandum of Agreement with the MA in Applied Sociology Program to provide data and internships to students and faculty in return for consultation and program evaluation support. The research analyst at Parole, Stephanie Geary, generated the MOU with Dr. Hartwell. Ms. Geary guest lectured to Foundations students and also coordinated a field trip to a Parole hearing in November.
Welcome Aboard

The Administrative Services Unit is pleased to announce its newest member - Nelson Simao. Nelson joined the Parole Board in 2005, working for the Reentry Unit overseeing the agency’s Transitional Housing Program (THP). In 2008, Nelson picked up an additional responsibility as he began working with the Field Services Unit on the Interstate Compact team. In November of 2009, Nelson joined the Administrative Services Unit. In his new role, Nelson will continue to oversee THP, in addition to working with the Fiscal Department processing supervision fees and assisting with billing.

Please join us in welcoming Nelson to his new assignment!

W-2 Information

All W-2 forms have been mailed to your residence, and the unofficial W-2 employee forms are now available on PayInfo. If you would like to request a reprint, or if you have any questions regarding your W-2, please contact Rachel Thomas in the Human Resources Department at 508.650.4573.

SERV Bulletin

When you were a child or young adult, was there someone in your life - a teacher, neighbor, relative, coach, friend or boss - who encouraged you, showed you the ropes and helped you become who you are today? That person was a mentor to you. For as little as two hours a month, you can be a positive adult role model to a child in need. Regardless of your background, the greatest gift you have to offer a young person is your genuine interest in their life and your willingness to listen attentively. Visit the Mass Mentoring Partnership at www.massmentors.org to find an opportunity that is right for you.

Employee Discount at Sprint Nextel

This is a reminder that agency employees using a personal Sprint Nextel phone are entitled to receive 15% off their monthly charges. Getting the discount is easy and does not require a contract extension.

Employees interested in this discount can email bennett.rudomen@sprint.com. Just be sure to include your first & last name, e-mail address, mobile number and account address. This will ensure that your account is correctly coded so you receive the 15% employee discount.

This past holiday season the Parole Board participated in the annual Toys for Tots drive. Many children’s toys were donated by agency staff. Pictured here is Parole Board employee Julie DiCenzo dropping off the toys at the Wester Brook Police barracks.
Diversity Dialogue

By Ina Howard-Hogan, General Counsel/Diversity Officer

Dialogue with Julie Pease, Executive Paralegal & Executive Clemency Coordinator:

Julie, how long have you worked for the Parole Board?

I came to the Parole Board in November of 1996 as a Paralegal Specialist. Prior to that I worked as support staff for the Special Investigations Unit of the Middlesex District Attorney’s office.

When did you complete Diversity Training?

I participated in the agency training in 2008.

Can you remember a highlight from the Diversity Training?

I remember a specific discussion the trainers did for the participants. The discussion was about an individual disclosing to her friends and family that she was gay. I remember feeling that she was a brave and strong individual for having the courage to disclose to her family and friends no matter the consequences.

After the training, do you think you view “diversity” any differently?

Yes, I better understand that diversity involves more than just race. I am more sensitive to people’s feelings, and I believe I am more open-minded.

How do you think you benefit from a diverse workplace?

I know that everybody has something to contribute to making this a great place to work. After the diversity brunch at Central Office was held, I became exposed to different cultures, particularly different cooking techniques (i.e. Irish, Caribbean and Portuguese). I really liked the curry chicken with rice dish!

Something you would like to share about yourself that others may not know about you?

I was born in Columbia and came to the United States in 1975. I speak Chinese and studied sign language for five years.
In October 2008, the Interstate Compact Offender Tracking System (ICOTS) was implemented nationwide. ICOTS is a web-based case management application that allows member states (all U.S. states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) to facilitate all Compact-based activities. Users are required to agree and adhere to the ICOTS privacy policy.

Most activities between states (on Compact cases) involve the use of this database. Legacy cases are also included in this application. (A legacy case is one where an individual was under Compact supervision prior to the implementation of ICOTS, and was also under supervision in October 2008 at the start of ICOTS). The system also has a historical data component.

There are many benefits to ICOTS. Transfer requests (which were previously sent out by mail) now reach a receiving state on the day they are entered into the database. It is now possible to determine the status of a transfer request, and a due date is now assigned by the system. This allows for more timely completion and better tracking of home plan investigations. Progress reports and offender violation reports are also received more quickly than in the past. ICOTS users also have the ability to obtain information on non-MA offenders who are under Compact supervision in other states.

In addition to ICOTS, the Interstate Compact Unit continues to process cases of individuals who are paroled to other entities. These comprise all Federal detainers - to include Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) warrants, Department of Youth Services (DYS) and all other states’ detainers. An individual with an outstanding warrant in another jurisdiction is paroled to that hold rather than into the community. The Compact Unit monitors these parolees while they remain in custody. If the individual is released into the community prior to his/her parole discharge date, the case is transferred to a regional parole-office. If an individual is deported, the Compact Unit carries and monitors the case until the parolee reaches his/her parole discharge date.

These two aspects of parole involve many different jurisdictions, and although we all work within a basic structure, there are certain differences from one entity to another.

There is never a dull moment in the Interstate Compact Unit of the MA Parole Board!

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**Hearings Unit Winter Updates**

*By Tina Hurley, Hearing Examiner*

**Lifer Unit Assistance**

In response to Lifer Unit staffing shortages, Chairman Mark Conrad requested assistance in October from the hearing examiners with case preparation activities in the Lifer Unit.

I am pleased to report that as of February 2010, hearing examiners have prepared over a dozen cases for this Unit.

Assistance has included extensive travel to facilities, interviews, critical information gathering and interacting with key stakeholders (Department of Correction personnel, District Attorney’s offices, Victim Services and various other family members and attorneys). Additionally, hearing examiners have conducted numerous “check-in” sessions with offenders to ascertain their interest in meeting with the Parole Board.

**SPIRIT Enhancements Update**

The Hearings Unit continues to work with Information Technology to build on SPIRIT enhancements that began in the summer of 2009.

We now have a complete suite of the electronic template forms (including updated existing forms), which have been imported into the SPIRIT database for easy online access.

In addition, the tab for the Supplemental Parole Violation Report is now highlighted to alert hearing examiners and other parole staff to click on the report, when available.

**Placement in Treatment Programs**

Hearing examiners continue to work closely with Program Coordinator Nelson Simao for assistance in accessing residential treatment beds for suitable parolees during the time-sensitive preliminary hearing process. Finalizing a housing placement requires outreach and extra work, including numerous phone calls and discussions with the many parties involved.

Field and institutional parole staff have been instrumental in providing hearing examiners with valuable input to find the “best fit” placement.

Additionally, a special thanks to Transitional Services Unit staff members Debbie Griggs and Jessica Silva who have worked extra hard in the 11th hour to secure a final decision by the Parole Board regarding warrant cases.

A special thanks to all Parole Board staff involved. We appreciate the support!
By Roger Michel, Board Member

I would like to thank Chairman Conrad for giving me this opportunity to introduce myself to the Parole Board family! After 17 years at the Appeals Court, I am excited at the prospect of new challenges and am very grateful for the wonderful warm welcome I have received here at the Parole Board.

Born in Baltimore (yes, I love “The Wire”!) more than a few years ago, I got my first taste of Massachusetts weather when I arrived at Williams College in the early ‘80s. After graduating from Williams, I decided I needed a little break from waist high snow and sub-zero temperatures, so my wife (we met at Williams) and I decamped to England for a few years. I earned a Master’s Degree at Oxford University while she did the same at University College London. Having finally thawed out, we then returned to Massachusetts- Cambridge to be specific, where I started law school and she began her career in university administration, both at Harvard.

After law school, I worked in private practice at Hill & Barlow and then the Suffolk District Attorney’s office before landing at the Appeals Court where I served as senior staff attorney for criminal matters. The Appeals Court was great. Like the Parole Board, it is staffed by many wonderful professionals who bring high standards, a strong work ethic and a great sense of humor with them to work every day. I have many happy memories of my time there.

But life has its seasons, and it was time for a change. Over the years, I had become increasingly involved in administrative hearing work. The court frequently loaned me to the Board of Bar Overseers to conduct attorney discipline hearings. I also served several terms as Chair of the Fee Arbitration Board, the primary venue for the resolution of professional fee disputes in Massachusetts. After reflecting on possible next steps in my career path, the Parole Board seemed to present a great chance to combine my criminal law experience with my increasing passion for hearing work. Many letters and several interviews later, I found myself last December 22nd in the Governor’s Council Chamber getting sworn in as a member of the Parole Board.

Of course there are many other chapters to my Massachusetts story. My wife (who now works at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as an associate dean) and I have owned two wonderful greyhounds (we lost Daisy just before Christmas after ten great years). Our current livestock inventory includes nine finches, a tortoise and an indeterminate number of goldfish in our outdoor pond. I am a fine art photographer on the side, and currently have a show on display at the John Adams Courthouse in Boston. My wife is a pretty fair poet. We both hate shoveling snow!

Needless to say, I have saved all the scandalous bits for the many personal conversations I hope to have with all of you as I make the rounds over the next few months. Thanks again for making the transition so easy and pleasant. I look forward to meeting everyone.

The agency’s full seven-member Board poses together for the first time. Pictured from left to right are Massachusetts Parole Board Members Leticia Muñoz, Tom Merigan, Cesar Archilla, Mark Conrad, Roger Michel, Pam Lombardini and Candace Kochin.
What’s New with ABC

By Ina Howard-Hogan, General Counsel

In April 2009, the Parole Board implemented an intervention program designed to provide at-risk youth with an in-depth experience and understanding of the impact that criminal lifestyles have on an individual, their families, their communities and society in general. This program seeks to empower youth to make informed decisions concerning their attitude, behavior and potential consequences of their actions: the **ABC Program**.

In September 2009, the Massachusetts Parole Board chose the William Barton Rogers Middle School in Hyde Park as the pilot school for the ABC program. This school was chosen after parole employees visited the school and spoke with Principal Andrew Bott and other school staff. The school’s staff members were very interested in the ABC program and spoke of the benefits such a program could provide for many students in the school. Accordingly, Principal Bott, school staff and Boston Police D.A.R.E. officer Mike Rideout identified ten students to participate in the program. These students represent the 7th and 8th grade population at the Rogers Middle School. Each of the student participants met with parole staff, were informed of the expectations of the program and provided general information about the parole process. These ten students have committed to participation in the program once a month, while having their attendance, disciplinary behavior and achievements monitored.

To date, these students have attended three different parole hearings. Notably, on January 21, 2010, parole staff sponsored a “Girl’s Day” in which ten girls from the Rogers Middle School were invited to attend a parole hearing involving a female inmate. After the hearing, the girls were able to enjoy homemade refreshments while engaging in a discussion with parole staff concerning their thoughts about the hearing. Parole staff observed these female participants to be very interested in the hearing, noting the numerous questions and comments made by each student.

We Want to Hear from You!

What would you like to read in the next newsletter? Want to share your own story? Have comments about something you read in this edition? Let us know!

If you are interested in contributing to the Parole News please contact Stephanie Geary at 508.650.4558, or via email at stephanie.geary@state.ma.us.
Collaboration of Resources at its Best

By Lisa Jean, Substance Abuse Coordinator (Region Six, Lawrence)

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arolee, age 30, was convicted of an unarmed robbery in the state of New Hampshire. He was given a 7-15 year sentence. Before his incarceration, and during his incarceration, he was in and out of psychiatric hospitals. He is diagnosed with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia (disorganized type) and poly-substance dependence (alcohol, marijuana and heroin). He suffers from head trauma and lacks family support. When his file first came across my desk I did not have much hope for this individual having a successful parole supervision period. The odds seemed piled against him… it is so nice to be wrong!

It is amazing what a team effort can do for an individual in need of services. With the collaboration of Parole staff, the Department of Mental Health (DMH), Vinfen PACT, Health Education Services (HES), Team Coordinating Agency (TCA), Mass Health and the Social Security Administration, services were put into place to ensure that this parolee could successfully manage a lifestyle outside the walls of jail and psychiatric units. Let me introduce you to this parolee’s team, and share with you their contributions.

Parole Officer Bonnie MacDonald and I have worked closely together with other agencies to help this parolee adapt to his community and to prevent isolation. This has been achieved through regular contact with the agencies involved. We have met with the Vinfen PACT staff to coordinate services for the parolee. Bonnie introduced him to the Haverhill Clubhouse and TCA outreach staff. In addition to referring parolee to the HES Cornerstone Day Program, I accompanied him to his intake in an effort to help HES gain a true understanding of this individual, and to not allow him to sell himself short.

DMH contracted Vinfen PACT. They provided case management, therapy, and medication and money management. They found him affordable housing, assisted him with transportation for appointments and helped him with housekeeping responsibilities. SSI money benefits allow this individual to afford to live on his own. Mass Health not only pays for his treatment services, they also provide him with transportation to and from the Cornerstone Day Program.

I am honored to be part of this team. Not only can I witness the success of this parolee, I realize the importance of working together. I am grateful for the resources available in the state of Massachusetts. More importantly, I am grateful to work with such caring and committed individuals.

Agency Hosts Gang Training

By Tim Dooling, Deputy General Counsel

A
s many at the Parole Board may recall, last summer the Training Committee distributed an on-line survey asking employees to list training topics they would most like to see rolled out. After all the replies were tallied, it was clear that a gang training was a top priority and one of the most popular responses.

In December, the Parole Board hosted Captain Christopher Wright and Officer Brian Estevez from the Department of Correction’s Central Intelligence Unit. Captain Wright and Officer Estevez presented two days of informative and important training to over 90 Parole Board employees on the topic of security threat groups- more commonly known as “gangs”. Both Captain Wright and Officer Estevez are highly regarded in the criminal justice field and are both renowned experts in Massachusetts prison and street gangs. They both brought years of experience in dealing with gangs, both inside the walls of the Department of Correction facilities, as well as in the cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. The presentation was an intense and thorough discussion of the origins of the prominent national gangs, from the Crips and Bloods, to the Latin Kings and Neta. The presentations also touched on the many motorcycle gangs throughout the Commonwealth, such as the Outlaws and the Hells Angels. Also discussed were the many local street gangs from the various neighborhoods in Boston, such as the Magnolia Steelers, Orchard Park Trailblazers and the Boyos. Captain Wright and Officer Estevez spoke at length about the current trends in both prison and street gangs, identifying the major gangs in Massachusetts and the country, and what law enforcement agencies, such as the Massachusetts Parole Board, should know about identifying and dealing with gang members.

The Training Committee has several exciting and important training topics on the horizon for this spring and summer, so keep an eye out for more information. All of us at the Parole Board would like to thank the Department of Correction, Captain Wright and Officer Estevez for their informative, and at times entertaining, presentation and hope they will come back next year!
Last month, the agency said goodbye to Parole Officer Ron Rapaport. Everyone knows Ron by either his genuine smile or relentless work ethic. When I asked Chief of Field Services George Valentgas about Ron’s departure, he responded by describing the sentiment of his coworkers was not to ask Ron what his retirement plans were, but to instead question, “What are we going to do now without Ron?”

Ron has committed the past 33 years to being a standout parole officer with our agency. He started his career in 1976 as a parole social worker at MCI Norfolk interviewing inmates and assembling case summaries for the Board. After Norfolk, Ron worked for a federally funded program out of Billerica House of Correction titled “Victim Restitution.” I asked inquisitively about this program and Ron explained the idea was to aid inmates (convicted of property crimes) in their search for employment. Once employment was secured for the inmate, Ron and his Unit were responsible for taking certain monies from the inmate’s paycheck and “giving back” to the victim of the inmate’s crime. Ron promised that, “Although a great idea at the time, the concept never really took hold.”

Ron has also held positions as a junior parole officer at MCI Norfolk, an institutional parole officer at Bridgewater, a field parole officer in the Brockton field office and as a parole officer in the agency’s Interstate Compact Unit. Though his career with Parole is extensive, Ron is most widely known for his work with the Warrant and Apprehension Unit (WAU).

Ron talked to me at length about how far the WAU has come over the past 20 years. “When I first started with the WAU in the late eighties I was only responsible for entering and removing warrants in a database and answering late night phone calls from the State Police...Come the mid-nineties the Unit’s operations were revolutionized by the agency.” Ron explained how agency leadership was responsible for bringing back the Board’s “cold cases”- parole cases that had gone whereabouts unknown for many years. “They started assigning these cases to me, and with the help of modern technology and law enforcement collaboration, I started finding these missing individuals.”

Ron will miss his work with the WAU going forward. He enjoyed having the ability to use different resources, different agencies and especially computers, to find fugitives. “The WAU has a great reputation, not just in Massachusetts, but around the country, and that is something the agency should be proud of,” Ron stated. He also wants to inform current parole officers who may be interested in a career with the WAU, that the “door kick-in” mentality is not justified. “Future officers need to know that 50% of the time you are in the office doing paper and computer work. It’s not just about running around and making arrests, you need to have a taste for computers, research and paperwork.”

Ron’s retirement plans include traveling and the hopes of obtaining a part-time job in law enforcement. He is also thinking about relocating to Maine (summer seasons), and then on to Florida (winter seasons). I know I can speak for everyone in this agency in wishing Ron nothing but the best in his future travels!

To close, Ron asked that I mention a few individuals in this article, individuals he quotes, “Have all touched me in some small way throughout my journey with Parole.” They include: Parole Officers Kathy Kozak, Richard Vernick, Paul Hartford, Bob Jackson and Jerry Lynch; Transitional Parole Officer Christine Martell; Administrative Assistant Julie DiCenzo; Word Processing Operator Lisa Aponte; and lastly, retired agency employees Don LaFratta, Mike Kozak and the late Helen Havey.
Looking Forward to a New Transition

By Cesar Archilla, Board Member

One of the most rewarding jobs I ever held was as an Assistant District Attorney. The intrinsic value of that work for me however, was not in merely prosecuting those who had been charged with committing various offenses, but in assuming the sobering responsibility of acting as an arbitrator, an administrator of justice. To me that term was not just a legal cliché but a realistic function and the essence of what a prosecutor should be. Having attended law school later in life, and having worked for many years in a different field, I looked forward to actually making a difference in working within a system where justice, fairness and empathy were more than mere words. After leaving the District Attorney’s office and working as a defense attorney, I found my new role to be no less important and no different in seeing that justice, fairness and empathy were part of the equation in the not always pleasant business of crime and punishment.

I looked to a position on the Parole Board as a tremendous opportunity to continue making an impact and be part of an agency poised on the forefront of innovation and progress in the areas of offender rehabilitation and community reintegration. I was raised in the Bronx- the product of New York City public schools and hardworking Latino immigrant parents. I was fortunate to have been provided with a blueprint for success based on hard work, education and respect for others. Conversely, I also witnessed many in my community that were not as fortunate. Communities, families and the general public are directly affected by the manner in which we deal with offenders, as the requisite work does not end at the courthouse steps nor within our penal institutions. My impressions and views of the criminal justice system have been shaped by my experiences as an Assistant District Attorney, as a defense attorney and my varied work and personal experiences. I have seen many instances where the system has worked flawlessly in the administration of justice, and instances where we can do better. There is always room for improvement and greater efficiency.

I have been a member of the Parole Board for only a few months, yet from the outset I knew I was in a unique environment. The professionalism, camaraderie, dedication and expertise of everyone at the agency has been evident from day one. I have worked in state service before, and can truly say that the caliber and work ethic of the individual members of this agency are unparallel. I have been made to feel welcome, and been provided with exceptional support. My hope is that my personal and professional experiences may help to complement the varied backgrounds and experiences of my fellow Board Members and enhance the mission and function of the agency as a whole.

Chairman Mark Conrad (center) poses with newly appointed Board Members Cesar Archilla (left) and Roger Michel (right). The appointments of Board Members Archilla and Michel bring the agency’s Board back up to a seven member panel.
ServiceNet Joins the Parole Board’s Transitional Housing Program

By Nelson Simao, Contract Coordinator

For over four decades, ServiceNet has been providing mental health and human services for clients in Western Massachusetts. So when Baystate Franklin Medical Center decided to focus their energy and resources to their core hospital services and away from its housing programs, it was only natural that they approached ServiceNet to take over operations of the Beacon House for Men and the Beacon House for Women, both in Greenfield, in addition to the Orange Recovery Home in Orange.

All three long term residential programs (LTRP’s) provide housing for parolees under the Parole Board’s Transitional Housing Program (THP). In over 4 years, THP has placed more than 1,700 parolees into LTRP’s and sober houses statewide to serve the Parole Board’s mission of reducing recidivism while providing public safety.

ServiceNet provides a wide range of programming including: outpatient mental health services, programs for individuals with brain injuries, intervention and group therapy for batterers as well as operating homeless shelters. Sue Stubbs, President and CEO of ServiceNet, feels that the most important factor in preventing recidivism is the combination of integrated and step down services and she looks forward to working with the Parole Board in making permanent changes in ex-offender’s lives. For more information about ServiceNet, please visit their website at www.servicenetinc.org.

Bunker Hill Event Summary

By David Sullivan, Director of Placement

On January 29th, Placement Services, in partnership with the Bunker Hill Community College Reentry Collaborative, hosted an event for employers, non-profits and educational administrators. Employers and organizations were invited to Bunker Hill to observe the public safety and human service network behind hiring ex-offenders, as well as to be informed of the financial incentives their businesses may receive. Eleven companies attended, many of which came as a result of Chris Foster from the Massachusetts Parole Board and Nicole McLaughlin from the Middlesex County Sheriff’s Department.

The event was an excellent example of collaboration amongst executive offices. Diane Obear from the Department of Revenue’s Child Support Enforcement Unit moderated the event and Leslie Mark, from the Department of Workforce Development’s Division of Career Services, coordinated the registrations and event speakers.

The employers were given a chance to share their concerns regarding the hiring of ex-offenders, and shown that behind each ex-offender there is a support network that can assist with issues and concerns. Middlesex County Sheriff James Di-Paola was the keynote speaker and did an outstanding job outlining the concerns and solutions of hiring ex-offenders.

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As noted in other articles in this edition of the newsletter, a lot of recent activity has been focused on placement and reemployment efforts. As we all know, reintegration requires three main factors for success: housing, treatment/programming, and employment. Recognizing that 100% of sentenced inmates incarcerated in the county jails, and over 90% of inmates incarcerated in the state system, will eventually return to the community, we need a comprehensive and systemic approach to this issue.

While all three “legs” of the reentry “stool” each have a critical role to play, a strong argument can be made that without employment, the other two objectives are not within reach. That makes sense when you consider that without employment, the opportunity for sustainable and stable housing is hindered. In addition, without employer provided healthcare, access to treatment and programming is limited. Therefore, as common sense dictates and research supports, employment really does play an integral role in enhancing the possibility for meaningful and sustainable success.

Over the past year, several agency initiatives have been focused on this issue. These have included: securing federal funding for a second year of training from the National Institute of Corrections on ex-offender workforce development issues, the establishment of an ex-offender placement advisory committee which meets regularly and as a group established an employment blog, and partnering with Community Servings to develop the Step Forward program.1 Additionally, the agency has continued to work with partners to plan and conduct employer focused events designed to provide private sector companies with information regarding hiring ex-offenders. These efforts have all been developed and implemented within the Administration’s objectives of improving public safety by utilizing innovative, practical and evidence based strategies.

On Monday, February 1, 2010, an event was held at Bunker Hill Community College to follow-up on an employer educational meeting which occurred there just a few days prior. The event on February 1st was focused on highlighting the Step Forward program and advanced the conversation with employers regarding placement issues faced by parolees and ex-offenders. Attendees at this event represented a wide range of reentry stakeholders including Parole Board Chairman Mark Conrad, Bunker Hill Community College President Mary Fifield, Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Mary Beth Heffernan, Department of Correction Commissioner Harold Clarke, representatives from faith based organizations, community groups, private sector employers, other state agencies and most notably, Governor Deval Patrick.

The Governor, and all the meeting participants, were provided with a presentation on the Step Forward program from David Waters, the CEO of Community Servings. This was then followed up with a lively and productive roundtable discussion regarding the issues involved in reentry and reemployment, and the challenges we face in trying to improve the system.

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1Community Servings is a non-profit organization based in Jamaica Plain which provides meals to terminally ill people in Boston and surrounding communities. The Step Forward program offers ex-offenders the opportunity to gain valuable food service skills and experience. Details of the program can be found at [http://servings.org/about/news_item.cfm?news_id=210](http://servings.org/about/news_item.cfm?news_id=210).
Employers interested in hiring ex-offenders, non-profit organizations and representatives from educational institutions, were all there to make this event a success. Due to hard work of everyone involved, this event was one of the most beneficial held for the Commonwealth’s reentry initiative. This event was so profitable that the Governor’s Office requested a follow-up meeting. The following Monday agencies involved were tasked with holding a supplemental event which showcased Parole’s Step Forward program as a promising practice.

Pictured here is Chairman Mark Conrad speaking at Bunker Hill Community College.

Pictured above are the local businesses, educational institutions and local and state agency personnel who attended the employment event.
Governor Patrick Attends Reentry Roundtable at Bunker Hill Community College

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Over the past year, the Governor has filed several criminal justice reform bills, which would significantly improve the current coordination and manner in which reentry issues are managed in the state. These include CORI and sentencing reforms, as well as the recent proposal in the Governor’s Fiscal Year 2011 budget recommendation that probation and parole supervision be consolidated into a single department. In addition, Secretary Heffernan, who has been a great leader and ally in helping us meet our objectives, has been directing our efforts towards more effective and outcome-based operational enhancements and initiatives.

Governor Patrick and Secretary Heffernan’s attendance and leadership at the meeting are a testament to their continued support of our public safety efforts. As a result, we continue to work on developing new and creative ways to address these issues. Based on the event which occurred on February 1st, one thing is clear, we are not alone in our mission. More and more, our partnerships are expanding to include more nontraditional government agencies and departments, academic institutions, non-profit groups and community-based organizations. These collaborations ensure that stakeholders remain involved and engaged in the development of the changes we need to implement. As long as we stay committed to open and honest dialogue, our chances for meaningful improvement are realistic and attainable.

Mary Elizabeth Heffernan Appointed as the New Secretary of Public Safety and Security

The Parole Board would first like to take this opportunity to wish former secretary of Public Safety and Security, Kevin Burke, good luck in his future endeavors. The agency greatly appreciated all of Secretary Burke’s commitment, dedication and support of our agency.

At this time we would also like to extend a warm welcome and congratulations to the new Secretary of the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS), Mary Elizabeth Heffernan. Marybeth was appointed Secretary of Public Safety and Security by Governor Deval Patrick in January 2010. As the Secretary, she is responsible for the policy development and budgetary oversight of secretariat agencies, independent programs and several boards which aid in crime prevention, homeland security preparedness and ensuring the safety of residents and visitors in the Commonwealth.

Prior to her appointment she served as the Undersecretary of Criminal Justice within the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security. In that role she supervised the functions and administration of the Department of Correction, Sex Offender Registry, Parole Board and served as the Liaison to the Massachusetts Sheriffs.

Secretary Heffernan has more than 20 years of criminal justice and governmental affairs experience. Prior to being appointed as the Undersecretary, Secretary Heffernan served as the Associate General Counsel and Director of Intergovernmental and Regulatory Affairs at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center in Boston. She has also served as the Corporate Director of Government Relations for CareGroup Health Care Systems, the Executive Director for the Massachusetts District Attorneys Association, an Assistant District Attorney for Middlesex County, and in a wide array of other public and private sector legal and governmental positions. Secretary Heffernan is a member of the Framingham State College Board of Trustees (her alma mater), and she is a graduate of Suffolk University Law School and Suffolk University School of Management, where she received her Masters in Public Administration. She lives in West Roxbury with her two children.

We look forward to assisting Secretary Heffernan in carrying out her objective to improve public safety in the Commonwealth!