



*The 14 new parole agents in BTA Class #121 given the oath of office from Acting Chairman Tuttle are: (left to right) John Buckley, Michael Cinalli, Angela Davis, Casey Kephart, Harvey Leonard, Evan Merrigan, Sarah Milliron, Mark Orlando, Charles Page, Michael Phillips, Timothy Ross, Heidi Sulderits, Amanda Tarby and Scott Thompson.*

# the Green sheet

## Training is a non-stop priority

### **BTA Class #121 graduates**

Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup> marked the end of the first Basic Training Academy (BTA) Class in 2015 and culminated with the graduation of 14 new parole agents with the Board. The ceremony was held at the Department of Corrections' training facility in Elizabethtown.

BTA Chief Lou Perez stated, "Class 121 is one of the best classes the Board has ever seen go through BTA. Each class has its own distinct personality. Yours is positive. Apply what you learned these past eight weeks to the best of your ability and you will succeed."

Perez also has a vivid, and very cold, memory about BTA Class #121.

"The agents in this class had to conduct initial firearms training qualifications outside in the 5 to 15 degree weather," Perez recalled. "This year [for this class] it just so happened to be the coldest it's been in 20 years, with record breaking temperatures in the single digits while trying to qualify outside."

"They were all freezing trying to load their firearms and get the bullets down range to hit the target while they shivered in the cold, but they all made it through with flying colors."

Director of Training Greg Young echoed Perez's sentiment. "Now is when you are really going to start to learn. Be sponges. Act with the positiveness you have had the past eight weeks."

Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Reentry and Quality Assurance Cindy Daub offered advice to the new graduates.

"You are going to see and hear things that are not pleasant on the job," Daub said. "You need to be a positive influence on the offenders you work with and



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Basic Training Academy  
Division Chief*



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Director of Training*



“Be a positive influence on the offenders you work with and their families. What we do in every interaction changes that offender.”

*Cindy Daub  
Deputy Executive Director  
Office of Reentry and  
Quality Assurance*



“Being a parole agent is not just a job, it is a career path. Own it. Realize the impact you will have on someone’s life each and every day.”

*Dan McIntyre  
Deputy Executive Director  
Office of Field Probation  
and Parole Supervision*



“It’s not just what we do. It’s how we do it.”

*John Tuttle  
Acting Chairman*

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Daub noted that this was the first class to provide an additional week of training for the institutional agents. “We felt this extra week was important to better prepare staff who work inside the prison on their particular duties. Current Board staff who participated in this week of training are vested in the work of the Board and we’re committed to helping make this extra week a success.”

Deputy Executive Director of the Office of Field Probation and Parole Supervision Dan McIntyre noted that combined, Acting Chairman John Tuttle, Ms. Daub and he have over 100 years of experience in probation and parole. “Being a parole agent is not just a job, it is a career path. Own it. Realize the impact you will have on someone’s life each and every day.”

Tuttle highlighted these characteristics for an agent’s success on the job: a balanced approach skill set, respect, teamwork, positive “can do”

attitude and integrity. Tuttle stated that these characteristics coupled with organizational skills, time management and documentation “are essential to being a success in the field.”

“It’s not just what we do. It’s how we do it,” Tuttle said.

In addition to taking the oath of office and receiving their badges, two special recognitions were awarded.

Agent Mark Orlando received the Top Gun Award for marksmanship for his perfect score during Initial Firearms Qualifications. Agent Evan Merrigan was recognized as class Valedictorian for earning the highest grade on the written test -- 99 percent. Perez noted the competition was extremely tight as Agent Amanda Tarby finished a close second with a 98.381 percent.

To accomplish many of the requirements a parole agent must do in the performance of their daily responsibilities, their training begins with BTA.

## BTA

BTA began in 1978 as part of the Joint State/County Training Program that was developed through the National Institute of Corrections. At that time, a basic skills class was given to the parole agents that lasted just five days.

BTA is now an eight-week, intensive training program that all new parole agents must successfully pass in order to become a parole agent with the Board. BTA is held three times each fiscal year.

The curriculum for BTA is multi-faceted. The wide range of instruction topics runs the gamut from recognizing gang symbols and conducting a urinalysis screening to motivational interviewing skills and use of various computer applications. The courses have been developed by subject matter experts.

“BTA is intense,” Young stated. “There is no other way to describe it, but the subject areas we focus on cover a range of job-critical topics our agents need to know before day one of active duty on the streets.”

As BTA progresses, trainees take their first test after the first two weeks and then every week thereafter. What happens if the trainee doesn't pass a test? "They are given one more opportunity to take another test," Young explained. "If they fail the second test, they are removed from BTA and sent back to the agency they came from or terminated [from the Board]."

After graduation, all agents are required to complete 40 hours of annual training. Three mandatory firearm classes must be done each year to maintain firearm certification: a requalification, a tactical shoot and a dim light/adverse lighting shoot. They also need to complete annual staff safety training. This training recertifies the agents in defensive tactics, OC Spray, Taser, expandable baton and handcuffing. Additionally, any changes or updates are done in the annual staff safety training program.

The Board's Training Bureau develops and coordinates all in-service/annual training and solicits feedback from staff on any training needs. The data collected is analyzed and trainings are selected that meet the needs reported in the assessment. These trainings are scheduled around the commonwealth for state and county personnel to attend.

The Board's regional trainers are full time trainers, but in addition to their training responsibilities, they assist on arrests, transports and task force operations as needed and as training schedules permit.

A number of outside training vendors are used for specific and unique training topics. "These vendors offer a wide variety of classes from supervisory trainings to outlaw motorcycle gangs and from clerical trainings to computer forensics," Young said. "These are topics that Board staff does not have a subject matter expert in."

When reviewing the Board's training program, Young summarized by saying, "There are numerous times when agents find themselves in situations where they needed to employ deadly force, or a Taser or some force option that we train on. Our training is built around the job that is done by our agents on a daily basis," Young said.

"They may need to counsel an offender on job skills one day, and arrest them on technical violations the next. We need to prepare them for both eventualities."

But there are some situations where no training can be given – only an

## BTA TRAINING TOPICS

Probation and Parole Code  
PA Sentencing  
Ethics  
Policies and Procedures  
Addiction and Recovery  
Sex Offenders/Megan's Law  
Effective Supervision  
Street Supervision Skills  
Interviewing  
Gangs/Security Threat Groups  
Child Abuse  
Drug Subculture  
Criminal Thinking  
Infectious Diseases  
Domestic Violence  
Defensive Driving  
Defensive Tactics  
Required Board Forms  
Managing a Case  
Evidence Collection  
Children of Incarcerated Parents  
Motivational Interviewing  
Substance Abuse Testing  
Urinalysis Processing  
Electronic Monitoring  
Firearms – Live Fire  
Firearms – Tactical  
Firearms – Night Fire  
Hearing Process  
Interstate Compact  
Radio Operation Training  
Computer Applications



*Members of the Board's Field Tactical Training Division review notes after a range shoot. Left to right are Ken Smith, Dave Ball, Amos Pickens and Greg Young.*

agent's "gut feeling" and other skills he or she brings to the job will do.

### **"State parole. We have a search warrant."**

As parole agents and state police converged on a house where a parole absconder with past drug convictions was hiding, he could be seen running from the bathroom and a toilet could be heard flushing.

After the offender was placed in handcuffs, he was searched and \$1,160 in cash was found in his jean pockets. A search of the house uncovered sorting straws, a marijuana pipe and small heroin baggies used for drug sales. Agents remained concerned that evidence had been flushed by the offender.

One of the agents on scene had knowledge of residential construction and plumbing. He determined the possibility of evidence being stuck in the sewer drain and began to inspect the basement.

After finding the open 'cleanout' in the basement, the upstairs toilet was flushed again and packaged drugs began to float past the opening. After additional "flushes," the evidence collected from the sewer drain was 73 packets of heroin and 3 grams of "uncut" pure cocaine.

"We can train agents on how to secure evidence, how to properly search an offender and maintain their personal safety in a high-stress situation like this," said Young. "But all of the extra training and knowledge a person brings with them to the job can come into play at any time."

## Other Training Programs

For new Board employees, the Bureau of Human Resources conducts New Employee Orientation Program (NEOP).

These sessions are held approximately three times each calendar year. Topics focused on are: organization of the Board, Code of Conduct, time and

attendance, workplace harassment and diversity issues, safety awareness and critical incident training. Key offices of the Board are also highlighted: reentry, field and institutional probation and parole services, victim services and the chief counsel's office.

Staff may attend subject specific training, such as training on Microsoft Office software, as needed and approved by his/her supervisor.

For information about training opportunities that are available, staff is encouraged to contact the training bureau for further information. There is also a section on the Board's Intranet that is focused on various training topics.

## Agency Focus on the Importance of Training

Board procedure governs annual training and development requirements and dictates the

number of required training hours every employee needs to complete each fiscal year based on job classification.

Training hour requirements are 40 hours each fiscal year for professional/technical staff such as Board Members, senior management staff, parole agents and other management officials; 20 hours for other professional staff and 16 hours for clerical/support staff. All Board staff have a training requirement they are to fulfill.

"Our training procedures have been developed to assure that our personnel are continually developing skills and understand their specific jobs, as well as the probation and parole process," Young said. "Our training complies with the Performance-Based Standards for Adult Probation and Parole Field Services, Fourth Edition, developed by the American Correctional Association (ACA)."

### TRAIN·ING NOUN \ˈTRĀ-NĪŋ\

1 A: THE ACT, PROCESS, OR METHOD OF ONE THAT TRAINS B: THE SKILL, KNOWLEDGE, OR EXPERIENCE ACQUIRED BY ONE THAT TRAINS 2: THE STATE OF BEING TRAINED

### <sup>3</sup>TRAIN TRANSITIVE VERB \ˈTRĀN\

3 A: TO FORM BY INSTRUCTION, DISCIPLINE, OR DRILL B: TO TEACH SO AS TO MAKE FIT, QUALIFIED, OR PROFICIENT 4: TO MAKE PREPARED (AS BY EXERCISE) FOR A TEST OF SKILL