

The Green Sheet

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New Victim Advocate on a Mission "Awareness" top priority for Jennifer Storm

The state's new Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm is very clear on the agenda she has developed for the Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA).

"Awareness," Storm said recently. "My primary goal is to raise awareness about what the OVA does and how we can be of service to all of the commonwealth's victims. Our services typically fall at the back end of the criminal justice system, and many times victims aren't made aware of what we have to offer or they forget because there is such a significant time lapse between sentencing and when the offender is eligible for release."

The OVA was created in 1995 to represent the rights and interests of crime victims before the Board of Probation and Parole and the Department of Corrections. The OVA provides notification to crime victims of the potential for inmate release on parole, opportunity to provide testimony, and notification of the inmate's movement within the correctional system.

At the time when Governor Corbett announced the appointment of Storm, he stated: "Victimized by crime in her youth, Jennifer Storm refused to settle for the label 'survivor,' and instead took on the mantle of 'champion' on behalf of



After taking the Oath of Office, Jennifer Storm poses with Montgomery County District Court Judge Thomas Rogers (left) and Governor Tom Corbett.

thousands of others who have been the targets of criminals.

"In appointing Ms. Storm as victim advocate, we are naming a true defender of human rights and personal dignity."

Prior to her new position, Storm served for the past 10 years as the executive director of the Dauphin County Victim/Witness Assistance Program. This county experience is valuable as the OVA is also responsible for referring crime victims to local programs and basic crisis intervention and support. Victim assistance coordinators on staff at the OVA work with local advocates at community-based victim services programs and with advocates in county district attorney's offices to ensure that all victims of crime who have requested post-sentencing services receive the compassionate and individual attention and advocacy that they require.



Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm provides remarks at her Oath of Office ceremony.

New Victim Advocate

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Dave Freed, president of the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association and district attorney of Cumberland County, is aware of Jennifer’s passion and knowledge of victim services.

"Jen Storm is a fearless advocate for victims of crime. She has shown throughout her career that she understands the combination of empathy and toughness needed to speak for those who are often unable to speak for themselves," Freed said. "Jen's strong record and compelling personal journey make her a solid choice to be our state victim advocate. I commend Governor Corbett for making such a strong selection."

Other responsibilities of the OVA include providing general information on the status and location of the inmate as allowed by law, notification of the expiration of an inmate’s maximum sentence or date of execution, if applicable, as well as preparing a victim who chooses to witness an execution.

Nominated by Corbett on November 8, 2013, Storm began working in the OVA on Monday, December 2. She officially took the Oath of Office from Montgomery County District Court Judge Thomas Rogers at the Victims Services Center of Montgomery County on December 20.

Storm currently serves on the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Victim Services Advisory Committee, Dauphin County Domestic Violence Task Force, Dauphin County Criminal Justice Advisory Board, Elder Abuse Task

Chairman Potteiger and Victim Advocate Jennifer Storm pose with OVA staff members: (left to right) Kathleen Murphy, Heather Cattron, Lisa Martire, Tara Gross, Karen Laird and Pennie Hockenberry



Force of Dauphin County and Crime Victims Alliance of Pennsylvania.

The author of several books and magazine articles, Storm has received numerous honors for her advocacy efforts.

"I hope to create a seamless transition between the local victim services processes and ours at the state level," Storm said. "In doing so, we will create collaborative partnerships with our local district attorney’s offices and victims services so they know who we are, what we do and when to call us.

"On the state level, I hope to have an active role in all facets of the various justice systems...to be a voice for victims in all arenas that I can and to raise the profile of our office so if there is a situation within the commonwealth where a victim is in need of advocacy, they know who to call," Storm added.

Looking ahead to the future, Storm also has long-terms goals. "I would like to assess the Crime Victim’s Act and seek to update it to bring it in-line with many of the other legal changes that have occurred over the years to ensure victims’ rights are interwoven throughout the process."

Lackawanna Reentry graduation

In December 2013, successful offenders of the Lackawanna Reentry Program graduated and received their awards from the Board. These recent graduates are pictured with Scranton District Office Parole Agent Tony Spears.



Mercer District Office holds offender job fair

On Thursday, November 14, the Mercer District Office conducted a job fair for 85 offenders within the community. The job fair was the first such event for the Mercer District.

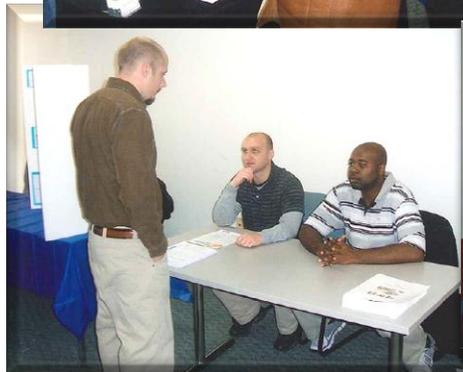
“The job fair went very well for our first one,” said Parole Supervisor Amy Landfair. “I would definitely consider it a success.”

Many of the district’s employers attended the event, several of whom offered on-the-spot interviews. The employers included: BC3 (Community College), Thompson Fabricating, Precision Manufacturing Institute, The Bottom Line, New Castle School of Trades, Family Service Corps of Butler Memorial Hospital, Startel, Miller Brother Staffing Solutions and George Junior Republic.

Members of the planning committee for the Board were: District Director Dan Pustinger, Parole Supervisor Dennis Hoerner, Parole Agents Clowes, Karabin and LaBenne and Clerk Typist Tammy Crespo.

“Mercer County Careerlink Administrator Angela Palumbo was a huge asset as she provided the space for us to hold the fair,” Supervisor Landfair said.

“Hopefully, we will be able to organize another for late spring/early summer.”



Above, attendees at the Mercer DO Job Fair interact with local employers who participated in the event. At right are Board staff (from left to right): Mercer District Director Pustinger, Parole Agent LaBenne, Director, Office of Field Probation and Parole Supervision Daniel McIntyre, Director of the Office of Reentry and Quality Assurance Cindy Daub and Reentry Services Director Rich Podguski.



2013 ELP Graduation

Two Central Office Board staff members are December 2013 graduates of the Commonwealth’s Emerging Leadership Program (ELP): Parole Manager Matt Reed and Classification/Organization Management Division Chief Tasha Geyer.



Above: Matt Reed poses with his supervisor, Interstate Probation Director Margaret Thompson and Secretary of Administration Kelly Powell-Logan. At left, Tasha Geyer poses with Supervisor Lisa Whary and Secretary Logan.



The ELP program is for employees who display leadership potential and it helps to develop knowledge and skills in communication, ethics, critical thinking, strategic planning, and collaboration.

Harrisburg Parole Supervisor meets “pen pals”

As a commonwealth employee, he is known as a Parole Supervisor Harris.

To the Pennsylvania Air National Guard 193rd Special Operations Squad out of Middletown, he is known as Lt. Col. Harris.

But to a group of students at the Tri-Community Elementary School in the Central Dauphin School District near Harrisburg, he is a hometown hero.

While deployed in Afghanistan, Harris and a fellow airman became pen pals, receiving and responding to cards and letters from students. In early December 2013, Harris returned home to the mid-state and was



Above: Parole Supervisor Harris answers questions from the students at the school. Above right: Harris and his fellow airman talk to the student assembly. At right, the “hometown heroes” are greeted with cheers by the students at Tri-Community Elementary.



treated to an assembly in his honor at Tri-Community Elementary.

As Harris arrived with his fellow airman, they were greeted enthusiastically by students with U.S. flags and a personalized video. They

both spent time talking to the students to whom they had been writing while overseas. As a token of their appreciation, Harris presented the school with a U.S. flag.

All in an Agent’s Day...Stories from the Streets

Pittsburgh DO

In mid-December, Agent Ciesielski was conducting what should have been a routine home plan investigation at the private residence of an offender’s girlfriend in McKees Rocks. When the girlfriend answered the door, he identified himself as a state parole agent and explained that he was there to discuss her offer of a home plan. The offender’s girlfriend stated that the offender was not home because of an ongoing argument they were having, but showed Agent Ciesielski into the home. While talking with the woman, he observed two bricks of heroin labeled "good and plenty"

along with approximately nine \$20 bills on the living room table.

As he walked toward the table, Agent Ciesielski saw a chrome handgun on the floor with a scope attached, which was later identified as a fully loaded 357 Magnum revolver. Beside the gun was a gray box partially opened that contained 90 bricks of heroin. Agent Ciesielski immediately secured the weapon and contacted local law enforcement authorities. The drugs were confiscated along with extra ammunition.

Benefits of U.S. Marshals partnership pays off again

A sex offender who absconded from parole supervision was placed on the

U.S. Marshals Most Wanted List on Philadelphia Channel 6 ABC website on November 20, 2013. On a tip from the general public, the offender was apprehended by the Board’s Philadelphia FAST unit later that same day.

The offender was arrested at 7 p.m. at a private Philadelphia residence. He attempted to barricade the front door of the property but officers were able to gain entry and place him in custody. The offender was wanted on parole violations and had been on probation for sexually assaulting a family member starting when the victim was 4 years old.

All in an Agent's Day...Stories from the Streets

A "Nut" for Jesus

(Portions of this article taken from December 2013 Jubilee Ministries newsletter.)

His given name is Mike, but most people call him "Nut" – shortened from his youth nickname of Peanut because of his size. According to Nut, he started abusing alcohol and marijuana as a teenager living in Hanover. He continued using marijuana for the next 10 years until his 30s, when he changed to cocaine and crack. His abuse of alcohol continued until 2008, when at the age of 48 he was arrested and incarcerated.

In 2009, he was sentenced to two to six years on drug charges and was granted parole in December of 2010. According to Nut, "During the 27 months in prison, I began to reassess my life. With the help of a new spiritual perspective and drug and alcohol classes...I found hope for a new life...I am so glad to be a "Nut" for Jesus!"

After his release from prison, Nut entered the Discipleship Program of Jubilee Ministries. "It was a 12-month recovery program for incarcerated men with addictions who are looking for a changed life. That was me."

Nut successfully completed the program on January 1, 2012. "It was a year I will never regret. It gave me a foundation for living that I never had. I'm a new man. I have new friends, new desires, a positive outlook on life and healthy lifestyle."

Nut is currently under the supervision of Agent Sweigart in the Board's Lancaster Sub Office. His maximum sentence date is August 5, 2014. "He has done a great job while on supervision," Agent Sweigart stated. "I wish all offenders I supervise were like Nut."

Pittsburgh agents selected for LEAD awards

Pittsburgh District Office Parole Agents Ackerman, Long and McAleer were selected for LEAD (Law Enforcement Agency Director) Awards in November 2013. The event was held at the University of Pittsburgh.

Agent Ackerman was commended for his efforts to defuse a volatile situation without the loss of life or serious injury that occurred on July 24, 2013. A team of parole agents and local police conducted a residence search for a wanted fugitive. He was found hiding in the basement under a pile of boxes. When asked to show his hands, the fugitive stood up and yelled "I'm not going back to jail" and kept his right hand behind his back.

Throughout the next 20 minutes, it became apparent that the fugitive was under the influence of drugs or alcohol as he kept repeating to the agents and police, "Shoot me. I want to die instead of going back to jail." During the standoff, Agent Ackerman was able to engage the offender in conversation and convince him to show both of his hands. As Agent Ackerman began to handcuff him, the offender resisted arrest and was tased in order to bring him under control. A .45 caliber weapon was found on him and he admitted to authorities that he had been hitting heroin "hard" for several days.

Agents Long and McAleer received the award for their participation in the eight-person Western Pennsylvania Fugitive Task Force (WPAFTF) that investigates and apprehends persons who have outstanding state and/or federal warrants. In just one year alone, the task force apprehended 512 violent felony fugitives, thus increasing public safety in western Pennsylvania.

Chester District Office supports local charities

Staff from the Chester District Office is very involved in giving back to their community by participating in local charity events.

On December 7, District Director Mark Carey participated in the 5K Ugly Sweater Run that benefitted Toys for Tots.

Then, despite bone-chilling temps and mounds of snow, Chester staff ran into the icy waters at the Neshaminy State Park in Bensalem Township on Saturday, January 25, to participate in the Polar Plunge that benefits Special Olympics. After the final totals were counted, Chester District staff raised more than \$5,000.



Polar Bear Plunge team



District Director Carey