

Governor recognizes exemplary IDOC and IDJJ staff and fallen heroes during National Correctional Officers and Employees Week

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Six employees awarded top honors

SPRINGFIELD - Governor Bruce Rauner today joined Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) for a

combined ceremony with the Illinois Correctional Employees' Memorial Association (ICEMA) to recognize the departments' past and present heroes.

"Correctional and law enforcement officers face tremendous challenges and risk every day. I am honored to recognize the brave men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice," said Governor Rauner. "This Memorial Wall serves as a physical reminder of their sacrifice. It's a place of reverence and deep gratitude for the entire state to recognize their bravery and courage."

The ceremony honored the memory of IDOC and IDJJ fallen heroes who died in the line of duty. The Memorial Wall serves as a lasting tribute to their memory. The agencies also recognized the outstanding contributions of their current staff. Nearly 75 employees were nominated by their colleagues and supervisors to receive the highest honor of Correctional Officer of the Year, Parole Agent of the Year, Corrections Employee of the Year, Juvenile Justice Specialist of the Year, Juvenile Justice Aftercare Specialist of the Year and Juvenile Justice Program Staff of the Year.

The overall winners were chosen by each of the departments' executive staff. The nominees were judged on leadership, initiative, professionalism and service to their community and career.

IDOC Acting Director John Baldwin and IDJJ Director Heidi Mueller commended the efforts of correctional staff within their respective agencies.

"National Correctional Officers and Employees Week recognizes the excellence of correctional employees throughout the U.S.," Baldwin said. "The employees being honored today play a significant role in building and shaping the future of the Illinois Department of Corrections. We are inspired by their professional strengths that help us meet the goals of our mission. The agency commends its correctional staff and honors its fallen heroes for their commitment to public safety, bravery and leadership to the State of Illinois."

"The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice is committed to helping youth rehabilitate and promoting positive outcomes through effective programming," said Mueller. "The employees being recognized today are commended for their positive impact and commitment to helping youth in our care successfully return to their communities. Staff works diligently to encourage youth in making the right choices and building on their strengths as well as teaching new skills to youth in a safe learning and treatment environment."

Employees receiving top honors during today's ceremony are:

Correctional Officer Kyle Donjon at Menard Correctional Center

Correctional Officer Kyle Donjon has been selected as the 2017 Correctional Officer of the Year for his excellent leadership and initiative. Donjon joined IDOC in 2001 at Southwestern Illinois Correctional Center and transferred to Menard Correctional Center in 2010, where he was named Employee of the Month in June 2013. He is assigned as assistant tool control officer. His level of detail is impeccable. He is responsible for the accountability of nearly 10,000 tools at the center. Through great personal initiative, he improved the Tool Control Accountability System that resulted in a complete overhaul of the Tool Control Numbering System and subsequent redesign of the Tool Bin Numbering System. He further created a record tracking system to monitor all duties of the tool control assignment officer and streamlined the process for issuing and assigning a new tool. He is a member of the Weapons Task Force and Menard Tactical Unit and received numerous accreditations for participating in tactical operations and playing a vital role in statewide tactical operations. Over the last year, his efforts have been exemplary in spreading awareness of weapons material and weapons manufacturing. Donjon's friendly and cordial relationship with staff reflects his dedication to them and their safety. His versatility and diligence are of superior credit and support the agency's high standards. Donjon is a valuable asset to the facility and the IDOC as a whole.

Senior Parole Agent Ramsey Rusef at Parole District 2

Senior Parole Agent Ramsey Rusef was named the IDOC 2017 Parole Agent of the Year for his outstanding job performance. A veteran of the IDOC, his experience dates back to 1996 when he joined as a correctional parole agent I with the Illinois Department of Corrections in the Juvenile Division. He promoted to correctional parole agent II in 2000 and transferred that same year to the Adult Division where he was assigned to the Dixon Parole Office. He later was assigned to the Aurora Parole Office and has served there since 2002. As a role model for others to follow, Rusef's professionalism is commendable and welcoming in a climate that can be demanding. He brings a fresh look and response to events that can be stressful and has the ability to improve the situation with his warm and gracious attitude. Rusef excels in communication and organizational skills. He also has been assigned to the DuPage County Jail where he is the lead agent with serving violation reports, preliminary hearings, transports and monthly law enforcement meetings. He is always willing to assist the commander and co-workers. He requests reports from the DuPage County Jail and provides timely follow-ups with staff when tasks are completed. Rusef exhibits positive leadership skills and is a tremendous asset to the IDOC Parole Division.

Correctional Nurse II Stephanie Schertz at Pontiac Correctional Center

Correctional Nurse II Stephanie Schertz was selected as the IDOC 2017 Employee of the Year for her knowledge and professionalism to the job. She began her career at Pontiac Correctional Center with Wexford Health in 2007 and was later hired as a state correctional nurse in 2011 and certified as a correctional nurse II in 2012. She currently works the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift and sets an excellent example with her commitment to the center and her profession. Her knowledge is invaluable as other staff and nurses seek her advice. She is a true leader and always the first person to help staff in need of assistance, whether it is training another nurse or helping out in the Infirmary or Urgent Care. The medical director additionally appreciates her knowledge and capabilities when she is assigned to work with him. She was additionally named the December 2016 Employee of the Month. Schertz is an asset to Pontiac Correctional Center through her professional and dedicated nursing skills.

Juvenile Justice Specialist Kyle Robson at Illinois Youth Center-Harrisburg

Juvenile Justice Specialist Kyle Robson was named the IDJJ 2017 Juvenile Justice Specialist of the Year. Robson functions at a high level of professionalism. He is assigned to the 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. shift, primarily as an Intel officer. Robson is also utilized at other facility posts with flexibility to perform Intel duties. Robson is a qualified CPI (Crisis Prevention Institute) trainer and actively participates in the training of the center's employees with the proper use of CPI techniques. Robson additionally works as a screener for the agency to assist civilian applicants to receive grades for potential employment with the department. He has been assigned as a Training Academy class counselor during past academy classes and recently has been assigned to coordinate and participate in the training of newly hired juvenile justice specialist interns for IDJJ. He also accompanies the center's Training Academy trainees to IYC-Harrisburg for their job shadowing portion of their training where he actively participates in hands-on instruction with the intern trainees and assesses their individual performance. Robson is an exemplary employee; his talents have risen to the level of validating him to be an outstanding asset to both IYC-Harrisburg and the IDJJ.

Aftercare Specialist Beverly Wilcher at Northern District

Aftercare Specialist Beverly Wilcher was named the IDJJ 2017 Aftercare Specialist of the Year. Wilcher is an excellent aftercare specialist. She works in the Englewood neighborhood of Chicago and brings strong commitment, dedication, creativity and leadership to the job. She sets high goals and standards of accountability for herself and the youth she supervises. Wilcher seeks out resources for her youth and helps her co-workers. She brings laughter when days may seem bleak or stressed. Wilcher is tough and courageous, yet caring and cautious. She is firm with her youth, yet encourages them to work toward independence so they can be productive citizens. She constantly

looks for ways for improvement in her field. Wilcher worked to complete her master's degree while simultaneously pairing up with another specialist to take lead with the opening of the Day Reporting Center in Chicago. She and her co-worker brought in array of services and assured parent participation and continue this effort to this day. The creatively she used for this event reflects her commitment to the Aftercare Department. She is a great asset to the field and IDJJ.

Treatment Unit Administrator Dr. John Warshawsky at IYC-Harrisburg

Treatment Unit Administrator Dr. John Warshawsky was selected as the IDJJ 2017 Program Staff of the Year. He is a textbook example of a professional in performing his duties as well as his supervisory role. He is well received by staff and youth alike. His ability to communicate with all parties and stellar vocabulary are most noteworthy. Warshawsky has taken the Juvenile Sex Offender (JSO) Program to the next level. He works diligently with the JSO youth and the mental health professionals. Striving to make improvements to the program, he looks for ways to incorporate the latest treatment techniques that is most therapeutic for the youth population. Warshawsky maintains his regular work load as supervisor and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) leader, bringing his innovative ideas to better serve the youth and staff alike. He is a leader in every sense and the center and agency are fortunate to have such a person who advocates for youth and what is in their best interest.

Nominees List for 2017 Illinois Department of Corrections Adult Division

- Big Muddy River CC Correctional Officer Glen Martin
- Centralia CC Correctional Officer Jimmy Leek
- Danville CC Correctional Officer Charles Ray
- Decatur CC Correctional Officer Joy Gray
- Dixon CC Correctional Officer Scott Meyer
- East Moline CC Correctional Officer Bryan Lashelle
- Graham CC Correctional Officer Monte Waterman
- Hill CC Correctional Officer Mitchell Thompson
- Illinois River CC Correctional Officer Spencer Coonradt
- Jacksonville CC Correctional Officer Eric Bergee
- Kewanee CC Correctional Officer Richard Dana Jr.
- Lawrence CC Correctional Officer Jerry Tanner
- Lincoln CC Correctional Officer Brandon Myers
- Logan CC Correctional Officer David Serrao
- Menard CC Correctional Officer Kyle Donjon
- Pinckneyville CC Correctional Officer Donna Jones
- Pontiac CC Correctional Officer Jordan Pratt
- Robinson CC Correctional Officer Kevin Shewey

- Shawnee CC Correctional Officer Brent Hunsaker
- Sheridan CC Correctional Officer Lucas Despain
- Southwestern Illinois CC Correctional Officer Tyrone Carter
- Stateville CC Correctional Officer Aleisha Flanagan
- Taylorville CC Correctional Officer Michael Broux
- Vandalia CC Correctional Officer Linda Eller
- Vienna CC Correctional Officer Matthew Plummer
- Western Illinois CC Correctional Officer Thomas Thompson
- Fox Valley ATC Correctional Residence Counselor I Sharman Collins
- Peoria ATC Correctional Residence Counselor I Melinda McCallister

Parole Division

- Parole District 1 Senior Parole Agent Andre Cardine
- Parole District 2 Senior Parole Agent Ramsey Rusef
- Parole District 3 Senior Parole Agent Patrick Hess
- Parole District 4 Senior Parole Agent Cindy Lutz
- Parole District 5 Senior Parole Agent Patrick Grubbs

Employee of the Year

- Big Muddy River CC Health Care Unit Administrator Debbie Isaacs
- Centralia CC Sgt. Michael Etheridge
- Danville CC Major John Burger
- Decatur CC Electrician Jacqueline Sutton
- Dixon CC Office Administrator III Nona Edmunds
- East Moline CC Executive Secretary I Christine Noble
- Graham CC Account Tech I Leah Patrovich
- Hill CC Counselor II David Patch
- Illinois River CC Food Services Supervisor III Jeff Shults
- Jacksonville CC Counselor II Everick Turner
- Kewanee CC Educator Dean Price
- Lawrence CC Account Tech Lesia Greifzu
- Lincoln CC Chief Engineer Nate Garrett
- Logan CC Casework Supervisor Marcia Mibbs
- Menard CC Executive I Jill Wehrheim
- Pinckneyville CC Maintenance Craftsman Bruce Gale
- Pontiac CC Correctional Nurse II Stephanie Schertz
- Robinson CC Food Services Program Manager Tracy Knight
- Shawnee CC Administrative Assistant I Marianne Vaughn
- Sheridan CC Sgt. Ed French
- Southwestern Illinois CC Stationary Chief Engineer Berard Gallant

- Stateville CC Locksmith Anthony Johnson
- Taylorville CC Administrative Assistant I Paula McCray
- Vandalia CC Chaplain Keith Heberer
- Vienna CC Steamfitter Christopher Smith
- Western Illinois CC Administrative Assistant I Julie Houston
- Fox Valley ATC Executive Secretary I Mohammad Rashid
- Peoria ATC Correctional Residence Counselor II Justin Ellis
- General Office Human Resource Specialist Christina Austin
- Parole Office Associate Chautauqua Joyner

Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice

Illinois Youth Centers

- IYC Pere Marquette – Juvenile Justice Specialist Steven Oswald
- IYC Harrisburg – Juvenile Justice Specialist Kyle Robson
- IYC St. Charles – Juvenile Justice Specialist Bradley Desanti
- IYC Warrenville – Juvenile Justice Specialist Jennifer Maruyama
- IYC Chicago – Juvenile Justice Specialist Allen Lofton

Aftercare

- Northern District – Aftercare Specialist Beverly Wilcher
- Southern District – Aftercare Specialist Cecilia Ruffin

Program Staff of the Year

- IYC Pere Marquette – Mental Health Professional Hannah Lancaster
- IYC Harrisburg – Treatment Unit Administrator Dr. John Warshawsky
- IYC St. Charles – Office Associate Rachel Pry
- IYC Warrenville – Correctional Leisure Time Activity Specialist II Eric Crockrell
- IYC Chicago – Youth Family Specialist I Zakee Shahid

Video of the event can be found [here](#).