National Corrections Officers and Employees Week was markedly different in 2021. While the rest of the world was in lockdown, corrections officers and employees served their vital function in the face of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic.

Corrections officers nationwide continued to report for work every single day and to take heroic measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus throughout their facilities.

We believe these brave women and men deserved more than ever to be celebrated for their tireless efforts to keep us safe.

That’s why we celebrated the work done by Correctional Officers and Correctional Employees — but in responsible ways such as distancing, wearing masks, and other directives from the nation, states, and localities.

We have compiled some of these celebrations from all across our great country. They show how corrections officers and other employees were honored for their brave service in this most difficult year.

The official start of this celebration came on the first Saturday in May 1984, when then-President Ronald Reagan issued a proclamation calling upon the country to pay tribute to corrections professionals. This proclamation created a week of commemoration of the work done by correctional officers — an honor many felt was long overdue.

In 1996, Congress changed the name of National Correctional Officers Week to National Correctional Officers and Employees Week to rightfully credit all of the women and men who serve by working in corrections. This is truly a special week to celebrate and bring awareness to the importance and significance of our profession.

National Correctional Officers and Employees Week is a fitting occasion to honor, specifically, the dedicated public servants in our nation’s correctional systems.

“The professionalism, dedication and courage exhibited by these officers throughout the performance of these demanding and often conflicting roles deserve our utmost respect,” stated Reagan in his May 5, 1984, proclamation 5187.

We dedicate these seven days annually to recognize these great public servants, but we should not hesitate to make every day an opportunity to honor, praise and cherish all of the women and men in corrections.

One such celebration occurred in Concord, New Hampshire on May 14, 2021.

This was the date and time for the annual New Hampshire Law Enforcement Memorial which featured the New Hampshire Department of Corrections Honor Guard.

The Guard was established in 1991 and represents the New Hampshire Department of Corrections at events...
such as Academy graduations, parades, school presentations, and funerals.

The Guard is led by Yair Balderrama. He has been in the New Hampshire Department of Corrections since 1998 and a member of the Honor Guard for over 20 years. He currently works as an Investigator.

Balderrama really captured the essence of what National Corrections Officers and Employees Week is about when he said, “Every time I put the uniform on, it gives me a huge sense of pride knowing that I am representing the department and all the professional people that work for it.”

The Guard members also honor fellow officers who have fallen.

“Nothing can remove the feeling of watching a family weep after losing a loved one. I find myself reflecting on my own life during these unfortunate situations and think, how lucky I am to be where I am at in life,” said Honor Guard member Preston Schaub, a 14 year veteran of the Corrections Department who currently works as an Investigator/K9 Handler.

Ryan Conover, a 21-year veteran of the Department who is currently the Chief Probation/Parole Officer at the Keene District Office and has been with the Honor Guard since 2018 remembers a service for a Sergeant Bettens held at the prison.

“To honor the life of someone that was so well respected in the department and to see the way we all came together was the moment that I realized that I made the best decision to apply for a place on the team,” said Conover.

Keith Griffin has been part of the Honor Guard for 14 years. He’s a civilian Supervisor II running Hobby Craft and Recreation at the Northern New Hampshire Correctional Facility. He remembers vividly the day the Guard was invited to participate in Opening Day at Fenway Park. “The amount of people that got to witness this amazing team in action was out of this world,” he remembered.

Corrections Today would like to thank each member of the New Hampshire Department of Corrections Honor Guard for their extra service on behalf of corrections officers everywhere.

And we would also like to thank all the corrections officers and employees who came together under difficult circumstances this year to honor the sacrifice and service of corrections officers and employees.

As President Reagan’s proclamation founding this important week says:

“The important work of correctional officers often does not receive the recognition from the public it deserves. It is appropriate that we honor the many contributions and accomplishments of these men and women who are a vital component of the field of corrections.”

You will see on the next few pages some of the length’s corrections officers went to make sure they could have a safe National Corrections Officers and Employees Week event while still managing to have fun and honor the service of their fellow officers.

BY KIRK RAYMOND
GOING ALL OUT IN THE NUTMEG STATE

At MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution in Suffield, CT the facility’s Quality of Work Life committee coordinated Correctional Employee Appreciation week events on all 3 shifts each day of the week. Facility administrators, supervisors and staff volunteered to cook, serve and deliver food to the facility’s 700 staff throughout the week. Some of the events included: “Walking Tacos”, breakfast sandwiches, pancakes, baked potato bar, ice cream and a cook out.

CELEBRATING SAFELY

Chocolate chip pancakes hot off the griddle highlight the safe celebration at the MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution.
MIXING UP A TREAT FOR CORRECTIONS OFFICERS

It takes a big mixing bowl to stir up enough batter for 700 corrections officers and employees.
National Correctional Officers and Employees Week

DEDICATION IN UNPRECEDENTED TIMES

Director Daniel Junior thanks Miami-Dade Correctional & Rehabilitation employees for “your dedication to MDCR, public service, and keeping our Miami-Dade community safe.”

The Community Affairs Unit coordinated several week-long events which included: spirit week, raffles, a dunk tank, DJs, a carnival, numerous photo booths and an Appreciation Luncheon that served as a grand finale like no other.

CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO!

Video and all photos courtesy of Miami-Dade Correctional and Rehabilitation Department
MDCR EMPLOYEES RECOGNIZED FOR THEIR SERVICE

Gift bags, sundaes and special certificates were just a few of the ways the Miami-Dade Correctional and Rehabilitation office said “Thank You” to its employees during National Correctional Officers and Employees Week.

A BIG SHOW OF THANKS

Over 3,000 employees on all three shifts were provided a free meal and were showered with appreciation from their leadership.
CELEBRATING CORRECTIONS OFFICERS IN THE BUCKEYE STATE

↑ Richland Correctional Institution (RiCI) Warden Kenneth Black (middle), with RiCI’s Correction Officer of the Year Steven Armstrong and RiCI’s Employee of the Year Amanda Roush (case manager).

Assistant Director Stuart Hudson and DRC’s Correction Officer of the Year Christopher Hammond from Belmont Correctional Institution (middle), and Office of Prisons Deputy Director Ernie Moore. Asst. Director Hudson and Deputy Director Moore were showing Officer Hammond where his name will be displayed on the traveling Correction Officer of the Year trophy.

Office of Prisons Deputy Director Ernie Moore and Warden Wanza Jackson delivering pizza to staff at the Warren Correctional Institution.
Recognizing Corrections

#CorrectionsWeek on Social Media

BERKS COUNTY PENNSYLVANIA JAIL SYSTEM

As part of the National Corrections Officer and Employees Week, the Berks County (PA) Jail System bestowed its Supervisor of the Year Award to Sgt. Stacy Acker and Operational Support Manager Tiffany Himic. They appear here with Lieutenant Andrew Webber. Along with award presentation, the staff was provided with lunch from Mission BBQ.

MARK LUTTRELL TRANSITION CENTER, MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

Superintendent Taurean James made sure to go all out to ensure his staff understood his appreciation for them and their hard work during National Corrections Officer and Employees Week. Staff were treated to a burrito breakfast, a cookout-style luncheon, and were honored with special awards.

PLEASANT VALLEY STATE PRISON, COALINGA, CALIFORNIA

The Pleasant Valley State Prison’s (PVSP) Employee Action Committee hosted an outdoor luncheon event for their hardworking staff. PVSP staff were rewarded with tasty food and treats for the perseverance and dedication they’ve shown throughout the past year.

2021 LINE OF DUTY DEATH MEMORIAL CEREMONY, SPOKANE, WASHINGTON

The Honor Guards from Monroe Correctional Complex, Clallam Bay Corrections Center, and Stafford Creek Corrections Center took part in honoring fallen Correctional Officers Berisford Morse and David Christensen. Their names were added to the Corrections Officer Memorial Wall during the 2021 Line of Duty Death Memorial Ceremony.
Patrice Jones, Warden III at Bullock Correctional Facility summed up what National Corrections Officer and Employees Week is all about: “Despite these challenging times, [correctional officers’] service has never wavered as they continue to do anything possible to get the job done.” Here the staff at Bullock Correctional Facility enjoy a cookout and some special treats.

Employees pulled their funds together to have a steak and potluck luncheon. The participating departments provided all the side dishes.