



Impact Georgia

April 2014 Newsletter

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Have a great story idea?

Send to
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GDC partners with Middle Georgia State College to develop, offer online courses

Photo by Lisa Rodriguez-Presley



Commissioner Brian Owens and Middle Georgia State College President Dr. Christopher Blake finalize the education partnership agreement in a signing ceremony at SOSTC, March 25.

The Georgia Department of Corrections is partnering with Middle Georgia State College (MGSC) to develop and host online training for corrections staff. The move is expected to not only save the corrections department money but widen a path toward college degrees for staff members who want to pursue one.

Commissioner Brian Owens and MGSC President Dr. Christopher Blake made the partnership official at a Tuesday, March 25, signing ceremony. The event took place in the Commissioner's Board Room at State Offices South at Tift College in Forsyth.

(See COLLEGE pg 3.)

Around the Perimeter with Rick Jacobs

Content contributed by Susan Megahee

On January 1, 2014, Rick Jacobs was appointed as the new Director of Facilities Operations. Let's take a trip around the perimeter with our newest leader in Central Office.

Q: Educational Background: Associates degree in Criminal Justice from Georgia Highlands College, Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University, and Master's degree in Public Administration from Columbus State University.

Q: Previous GDC positions: Probation Officer I & II, Assistant Superintendent, Superintendent, Director of Special Operations, Warden, FOM North

Region & Deputy Director of Facilities Operations.

Q: Why a career in Corrections? *I have a great interest in helping people; opportunity.*

Q: What do you find most rewarding about working in Corrections? *Helping see others achieve.*

Q: Proudest accomplishment? *My children.*

Q: What are some of your goals as Director? *To create a safer and more progressive system of housing and programming for offenders.*

Q: What are some of the major challenges facing our facilities? *Aging infrastructure, upgrades, technology enhancements and staffing.*



Q: What do you look forward to most in management? *Teamwork.*

Q: What is your favorite quote? *"It behooves every man to remember the work of the critic is of altogether secondary"*
(See JACOBS pg 3.)

Calendar Events

Friday, April 4

Tift Alumnae Reunion Tour
& Dinner

Monday, April 7

National Crime Victim's
Week Event

**Monday-Tuesday,
April 7-8**

NCHCC Spring
Conference

Tuesday, April 8

CJCC Visit & Tour,
Coastal SP

Thursday, April 10

Deputy Warden Security
Academy Graduation

Tuesday, April 15

Northwest DRC
Commencement

Thursday, April 17

Annual Law Enforcement
Appreciation Day
&
Joint Board Meeting

Friday, April 18

Commissioner's TACT
Challenge

Tuesday, April 22

GDC Quarterly Awards
Ceremony
&
Savannah DRC
Commencement

Tuesday, April 28

HOLIDAY
Confederate Memorial Day

Tuesday, April 29

Columbus DRC
Commencement

NFL player reaches out to young offenders

Takeo Spikes brings message of hard work and hope to two GDC facilities

Story and Photo by Lisa Rodriguez-Presley

He could be anywhere in the world on a sunny Tuesday afternoon, but Takeo Spikes chose to spend the day inside the prison walls at Burruss Correctional Training Center in Forsyth, Ga. The two-time NFL Pro-Bowler from Sandersville, Ga., took time to speak to young offenders at Burruss and later attended a graduation from the Faith and Character Based program at Baldwin State Prison, March 26.

As a professional athlete, Spikes is no stranger to hard work and that was part of the message that he brought to the young men who listened to him speak. At age 37, he has to work harder than most to keep pace with the pool of young college players drafted into the NFL each year. He has had a successful career, but he also faced obstacles in getting to the pros, and staying healthy. In spite of those stumbling blocks, he has pushed forward, and told the audience they have to do same thing.

"There are no shortcuts to success," said Spikes. "It takes hard work and making good choices. I had plenty of times where I chose to do the wrong things, and every time, I paid for those mistakes, but I learned from them. That's what y'all have to do too."

Takeo's most influential role models were his parents. His dad logged long hours working in the nearby chalk mines, while his mom taught at the local schools.

"My brothers and sister and I were given everything we needed, but not necessarily everything we wanted," Takeo remembers. "My parents in-

stilled principles in us. They taught us about the value of money and having to work hard in order to obtain it."

Jimmie and Lillie Spikes believed in discipline and hard work, and as Takeo and his siblings grew older they came to understand how lucky they were to have tough, loving parents looking out for them.

"I was fortunate enough to be raised by my mother and my father," Takeo says. "So many kids in my neighborhood not only didn't have a father, they didn't have a father figure. It made all the difference in the world to me."

During question and answer period with the young offenders at Burruss, he stressed the importance of seeking out people who are a positive influence, even if you don't have them at home. Sometimes that means looking outside the circle of friends and family you have to community organizations or churches. It also may mean that you change the people you choose to associate with.

"Once I made it into the pros, I had to rethink some things," said Spikes. "I had to recognize that I had some friends who would do things that could cause me trouble. If we went somewhere to hang out and they got caught up in something, it would be my face on ESPN, not theirs. That doesn't mean I can't talk to them anymore or anything, but there are certain places and things that I can't be a part of anymore. Being different doesn't mean you have to turn your back on your friends, but it means you have to be smarter about your choices."



NFL player Takeo Spikes addresses a group of young offenders at Burruss Correctional Training Center. Spikes spoke to more than 50 young offenders and gave them straightforward answers and advice about resisting gangs and peer pressure, and making positive choices.

A fond farewell...



*To All My Wonderful Friends and Colleagues,
As I reflect back over the past thirty two years, I am filled with pride by the accomplishments of the men and women of this Agency as we strive for excellence in making Georgia the best Correctional system in the nation. You have devoted your careers to making a difference by both big and small actions, and should be commended for choosing this, somewhat challenging but always interesting, field. I am truly gratified by the work we have done and the course that our Leadership has set for the future. Thank you all for allowing me to be a part of your lives. God Bless you and your families.*

*Vanessa Hester O'Donnell, Deputy Director of OPT
Retired on March 25, 2014
32 years of dedicated and faithful service*

(JACOBS from pg. 1)

importance, and that in the end, progress is accomplished by the man who does things." - Teddy Roosevelt

Q:Do you have any hobbies? *Hunting, fishing & kayaking*

Q:Favorite movie?

Tombstone

Q:Music on your iPod?

Casting Crowns, Third Day and Toby Mac

Q:First concert? *Foreigner*

Q:First record? *Elton John's "Goodbye Yellowbrick Road"*

Q:Favorite app? *ESPN*

Q:Favorite book? *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, by Mark Twain*

Q:Which fictional character would you be and why?

Robin Hood, I love the story behind the story

Q:Do you have a celebrity look-a-like? *Not even close!*

(COLLEGE from pg. 1)

Middle Georgia State, working with the department, will produce online courses for corrections staff that include videos, interactive features and quizzes.

"By moving the professional development of employees to an online format, GDC will save both money and time for travel," said Dr. Darryl Hancock, dean of Middle Georgia State's School of Distance Learning.

Added Commissioner Owens, "This meets the goal of Governor Nathan Deal by working together with another state agency for the purpose of accomplishing one goal while saving taxpayers' money."

MGSC considers the partnership part of a larger effort to reach out to corrections department employees who want to earn their college de-

grees. MGSC is in discussions with various law enforcement-related employers on how to convert certain professional experience into academic credit and how to deliver additional courses online that staff would need to complete degrees.

MGSC and GDC representatives most involved in developing the partnership are Dr. Hancock; Charles Smith, Director of Academic Technology Services; Gail Donnelly, Training Director; Antonio Printup, Academy Director; Cathy Smith-Curry, former Leadership Development Unit Manager; and Joycelyn Lucas, E-learning Development Specialist.

To learn more about distance learning at Middle Georgia State, including a fully online IT bachelor's degree named the most affordable in the U.S., visit <http://www.mga.edu/distance-learning/default.aspx>.

Valdosta Probation Office Hosts Job Fair

Content contributed by CPO Lynn H. Baker

On March 20, the Valdosta Probation Office, in collaboration with the Valdosta Parole Office and the Valdosta Transitional Center held the first Job and Resource Fair for probationers and parolees. The event was held at Mathis Auditorium in Valdosta, and was attended by eighteen resource providers to include employers, substance abuse providers, mental health providers, housing opportunities, GED assistance

and Department of Labor.

The event was a great success with approximately 170 probationers, 40 parolees, and numerous citizens of Lowndes County in attendance to take full advantage of the resources offered.

Partnership among agencies was at an all-time high and many contacts and relationships were formed.

It was a great success for the probationers as well as staff members.



A crowd of job seekers waits to enter the the Valdosta Transitional Center job fair.



GDC's Statewide Mental Health Director, Dr. Jim Degroot will be addressing students, the community and professionals on the Evolution of Mental Health in Corrections; Past, Present and Future Trends during a day-long workshop on mental health trends at UGA Griffin Campus April 25th.

Albany Task Force Nets 57 Arrests

Story by Gwendolyn Hogan/Photo by Lisa Rodriguez-Presley



Officers outside of Command Center

On March 26-27, the Department participated in a two-day operation called, *Facing Albany Crime Together*. The multi-agency crime sweep included the Albany-Dougherty Drug Unit, Albany Police Department, Dougherty County Police, Dougherty County Sheriff's Office, Albany Gang Task Force, State Board of Pardons & Poles, Albany State University Police, Dept. of Juvenile Justice and the US Marshall's Fugitive Task Force. The operation netted a total of 57 arrests for probation violations, weapon offenses, drug charges and aggravated assault warrants.

Fort Gordon Military Career Fair

GDC hires 28



On March 20, the GDC & GA National Guard hosted a Military Career Fair in Augusta with 12 participating public safety agencies offering over 1,800 jobs across the state!

Participating agencies included GA Dept of Defense, GA Dept of Labor, GA Dept of Public Safety, GA Dept of Juvenile Jus-

tice, Pardons & Poles, MHM Services, GA Correctional Healthcare, Richmond County Sheriff's Office, Gwinnett County PD and Corrections Corporation of America.

Check with our agency's Facebook and Twitter pages for upcoming job fairs!



Battle of the Badges April Initiative

Content contributed by Susan Megahee

The American Red Cross is offering an "April Initiative" for our Battle of the Badges competition. This initiative is an opportunity for all staff members to visit their local Red Cross Blood Drive Donation Centers during the month of April, and their donations will count toward the Battle of the Badges competition for their office/facility. To find a donor site near you please visit: <http://www.redcrossblood.org/donation-centers/southern>

The competition is still anyone's game! Let's finish strong and don't forget at the upcoming Annual Awards Ceremony, your facility or office could take home the traveling trophy!



Like us on Facebook Check out our YouTube channel at GACorrections Tweet us at @GA_Corrections

MISSION

The Department of Corrections creates a safer Georgia by effectively managing offenders and providing opportunities for positive change.

VISION

To be recognized as the best corrections organization in the nation.



BRIAN OWENS

Commissioner

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