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**Have a great story Idea?**

Send to

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**Commissioner Bryson charts a new course for GDC**

*Continuing justice reform and transitioning probation operations mark big changes for agency*

Story and photo by Lisa Rodriguez-Presley

Commissioner Homer Bryson has been at the Department of Corrections for just a few weeks, but with big changes on the horizon for the agency he's had to hit the ground running. For Bryson, who began his career as a State Ranger and spent 32 years in state government as part of the Department of Natural Resources, that's not an issue. He was an integral part of reorganization and restructuring of operations at DNR and though corrections' mission is different, he says the fundamentals are similar.

"State agencies share many similarities," said Bryson. "From HR issues, to budgeting, finance, contracts and bonds, on the back end we all operate very similarly. I have alot of experience with all of these areas as the Assistant Commissioner at DNR and I think this will help to



Commissioner Homer Bryson addresses members of the Board of Corrections following his swearing-in at the Board's monthly meeting in Atlanta on Feb. 5

make the transition smoother."

Bryson started working at the age of 15, when he took a job at the Waycross Game and Fish Office  
*(See Commissioner Pg. 2)*

**Day Reporting Center Administrator bridges gap between Griffin DRC and Community**

Story by Susan Megahee



Ashley Hansen, Center Administrator for the Griffin DRC and her staff assist offenders in rebuilding their lives and rejoining the community by targeting the drug dependency that fueled their behavior.

Center Administrator for the Griffin Day Reporting Center (DRC) Ashley Hansen, believes success can be reached with the tools the staff provides to the 122 offenders that are in the non-resident program that targets high-need/high-risk offenders where drug dependency is the true underlying factor for their criminal activity.

*(See Administrator Pg. 3)*



## Calendar Events

**Thursday, March 5**  
Board of Corrections Meeting

**Tuesday, March 10**  
Macon DRC Commencement Ceremony

**Thursday, March 12**  
Military Career Fair  
Robins AFB,  
Warner Robbins, GA

**Friday-Saturday, March 14-15**  
Olde Order of Tift Alumnae Reunion

**Saturday-Sunday, March 15-16**  
Forsythia Festival

**Thursday, March 26**  
Military Career Fair  
Fort Gordon  
Augusta, GA



### (Commissioner from Pg. 1)

as a weekend radio operator. As a young man he knew right away that public service was his calling and his combined interests in working with people and a love of the outdoors made DNR a natural fit. An avid hunter and fisher, he became a State Conservation Ranger in 1983, and moved up the ranks over the years before leaving the law enforcement side of DNR to head to Atlanta as an Assistant Commissioner.

“One of my proudest achievements in state government occurred when DNR went through a shift in how we delivered conservation law enforcement,” Bryson said. “We created a separate law enforcement division, and we shifted to enforcement that was more centered around education. Hopefully, that trend will continue and will be of some lasting value.”

It’s not hard to draw the parallels between the changes Bryson oversaw at DNR to the changes that have occurred within the Department of Corrections under Governor Nathan Deal’s Criminal Justice Reform policies. Like the DNR’s shift toward education to prevent recurring offenses, there has been an increased focus on preparing offenders for reentry through a variety of education programs to help reduce recidivism rates.

“What the Governor has been working on the last few years makes a lot of sense,” he said. “With the creation of the new Department of Com-

munity Supervision, it will allow us to focus on our core mission of providing safe and secure facilities and have a more directed programming effort. GDC has made some progress in this area in the last few years and there were already many good things already occurring under Commissioner Owens leadership. We want to – continue in that direction and even ramp some things up.”

Change is never easy, but Bryson sees good things happening for GDC as a result of the creation of the new agency responsible for supervising offenders after they are released.

“I think there are many advantages to consolidating,” he said. “Creating a new agency allows the state to streamline the supervision process by consolidating common, core functions of Probation, Parole and Department of Juvenile Justice supervision under one roof. That alone can make the process more efficient because it allows for better communication, and monitoring of multiple offenders who may be living in one place or are a part of one family.”

With all of the coming changes, some would be overwhelmed by all there is to do, but Bryson is ready and excited for the future.

“I am excited to have this opportunity and have been talking to employees to get their thoughts on what is working and how we can make improvements. So far I have been very impressed with what I’ve seen.”

## Governor selects member of GDC staff for Board position

Story by Lisa Rodriguez-Presley  
Photo courtesy of Governor Deal’s Office

When Governor Deal began looking for qualified people to staff the Sex Offender Registration Review Board, he didn’t have to look far. Lori Rozier is currently employed with the Georgia Department of Cor-

rections, where she is the manager of the Sex Offender Administration Unit. She has been employed with the state of Georgia since 1995, serving in various roles with probation and facility operations. She is also a member of the Georgia

Probation Association. Rozier earned a master’s degree in Education from Georgia Southern University and a master’s degree in Criminal Justice from Capella University.

The Sex Offender Registration Review Board is responsible for protecting Georgia’s children and communities at large by identifying convicted sexual offenders that present the greatest risk of sexually reoffending. It is the Board’s responsibility to determine the likelihood that a sexual offender will engage in another crime against a victim who is a minor, or a dangerous sexual offense. Rozier accepted this tremendous responsibility and she was sworn in during a ceremony at the capitol on Feb. 17.



GDC’s Lori Rozier was sworn in by Governor Nathan Deal as a member of the Sex Offender Registration Review Board during a ceremony at the capitol on Feb. 17.



**(Administrator from Pg. 1)**

Hansen has served as the Center Administrator of the Griffin DRC since July 2012. In this position she serves as the liaison between the community and the DRC, overseeing facilitation of the programs and selection of offenders within the programs. Hansen supervises nine staff members who she notes are a part of the success in the DRC program.

“Success stories are only possible with the great staff here at Griffin DRC,” said Hanson.

One success story that sticks out to Hansen is that of a participant who was ordered to complete the program but refused to be a part of it. The participant told the Griffin DRC staff that he did not think he needed the program and that the staff could just ‘send him to prison’. An officer was able to get the participant to report for intake, and just a week after he reported, there was a total change in his attitude. The participant ended up being a model participant and completed the program.

“To see a participant who comes in on day one, phase one with a poor attitude to then complete the program with a positive attitude and drug free is the most rewarding part of my job,” shares Hansen.

Seeing success stories like these is reaffirming to Hansen who solidified her career in corrections while a senior in college through an internship with the Thomaston Probation Office. “I loved every aspect of my internship. I knew then that I wanted to work for the Department.”

Following her internship, she became a Probation Officer for the Griffin Probation Office in 2007. During her career with the Department, she has risen through the ranks serving as an Intensive Probation Officer, and Probation Officer III before her recent position as Center Administrator.

Although there are certain challenges in her field, Hansen believes that getting an offender started in the program is key. “Changing one life for the better means the program is a success,” states Hansen.



## *Caught in Corrections*



### *LaToya Linder, Etta Smart & Eliabeth Sanders*

***Mental Health Counselor LaToya Linder, Counselor Etta Smart and Probation Officer Elizabeth Sanders were “caught” working as a team! On Jan. 12, 2015, staff at the Savannah Probation Office and Day Reporting Center noticed a suspicious package in the male restroom. What was believed to be a bomb or explosive device was later determined to be fake. A probationer was eventually identified as the culprit thanks to the investigative work of Linder, Smart, and Sanders. The trio all played a role in assisting the Department to locate the source of the threat. Great job ladies!***

## **March is Women’s History Month**

**W**omen’s History Month had its origins as a national celebration in 1981 when Congress authorized and requested the President to proclaim the week beginning March 7, 1982 as “Women’s History Week.” Throughout the next five years, Congress continued to pass joint resolutions designating a week in March as “Women’s History Week.”

In 1987 after being petitioned by the National Women’s History Project, Congress designated the month of March 1987 as “Women’s History Month.” Between 1988 and 1994, Congress passed additional resolutions requesting and authorizing the President to proclaim March of each year as “Women’s History Month.” Since 1995, every president has issued a series of annual proclamations designating the month of March as “Women’s History Month.”





# Around the Agency...

## Comprehensive Audit Awards at Coastal State Prison



Officer Leticia Dukes won an individual award during the comprehensive audit at Coastal State Prison for work in Hazardous Materials and Safety and Sanitation. Both of these areas scored one hundred percent. The auditor was very impressed with her organization and attention to details. The sanitation of the facility was very impressive. Congratulations Officer Dukes. Pictured L to R: Deputy Director Wilson Hall, Director Sharrod Campbell, Officer Leticia Dukes, Warden Jose Morales, and FOM Robert Toole.

Ms. Sandra Carter won an individual award for her work as a teacher at Coastal SP. Coastal SP has a large programs and educational mission. This area performed very well during the audit in large to the efforts of Ms. Carter. The auditors were impressed with her commitment to providing the highest level of education possible to the offenders in her classes. Congratulations Ms. Carter! Pictured L to R: Deputy Director Wilson Hall, Director Sharrod Campbell, Ms. Sandra Carter, Warden Jose Morales and FOM Robert Toole.



The Mental Health Team won the TEAM award during the February audit at Coastal SP. The team scored above ninety percent with no critical findings. This is an exceptional score. Due to the various missions of Coastal SP, new offenders are constantly arriving. To achieve success of this level shows a commitment to excellence, great organizational skills and teamwork. Congratulations to the Mental Health Team. Pictured with Wilson Hall, Sharrod Campbell, Warden Jose Morales, and FOM Robert Toole is the Mental Health Team at Coastal SP.



Augusta Transitional Center Employment Manager Carlotta Ficklin has been certified by the National Institute of Corrections as an Offender Employment Specialist. The training is an interactive blend of activities, guest speakers and video segments and provides opportunities for participants to network, share strategies, and look for new ways to collaborate and improve outcomes for offenders. This training shows Ms. Ficklin's ongoing commitment to honing her craft. She is now planning to obtain the next level of NIC certification. Congratulations to Ms. Ficklin.



Graduation for the Inaugural Probation Management Academy was held at State Offices South at Tift College on Jan.30. In all, 27 students graduated from the course, which is designed to prepare Probation Officer III candidates for future management positions. Congratulations to the graduates!

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### 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.



**Homer Bryson**  
*Commissioner*

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