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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS RECOGNIZES OFFICERS  
DURING CORRECTION OFFICER DAY CEREMONY**

**TRENTON, NEW JERSEY – July 30, 2020** –The New Jersey Department of Corrections (NJDOC) today honored Correctional Police Officers with two events to commemorate those who have been killed in the line of duty as well as to recognize officers for their extraordinary efforts and commitment to the Garden State.

Events began this morning at Bayside State Prison in Leesburg with a memorial service commemorating the 23<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of the death of Senior Correctional Police Officer Fred Baker who was killed in 1997. The event commenced at 7:55 a.m. – the precise time that Officer Baker lost his life.

Following the memorial service, the NJDOC marked Correction Officer Day at Central Office Headquarters in Trenton with a ceremony in honor of all custody staff. The event featured an address from Commissioner Marcus O. Hicks, Esq. In addition, there was a presentation of the Departmental Service Awards in recognition of NJDOC employees who selflessly went above and beyond the call of duty, demonstrating remarkable bravery, to protect the safety and well-being of others.

“Our Correctional Police Officers are highly skilled professionals whose job is arguably the most challenging and under-appreciated in the law enforcement field,” Commissioner Hicks said.

“Correction Officer Day provides us with an opportunity to celebrate their unwavering commitment, while honoring those brave individuals who have made the ultimate sacrifice.”

Correction Officer Day was signed into New Jersey law in 2012 as part of “Fred Baker’s Law,” designating July 30 as Correction Officer Day in recognition of the dedicated service correction officers render to their fellow citizens. An annual proclamation issued by Governor Philip D. Murphy and Lt. Governor Sheila Oliver calls upon all citizens of the State and all other public and private organizations to celebrate Correction Officer Day by appropriate observance.

Departmental Service Award recipients include:

**Blue Heart Award**, awarded to any law enforcement officer who becomes permanently disabled or seriously injured in the line of duty:

- Senior Correctional Police Officer (SCPO) John Anthony (retired), Garden State Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Anthony Bitondo, Northern State Prison

**Distinguished Service Award**, awarded to an employee who has rendered unusually effective or distinguished service to either the Department or the community.

- SCPO Raymond Heck, Adult Diagnostic and Treatment Center, an NJDOC employee since 1995, who has been active in the Policeman’s Benevolent Association as well as a wide range of community organizations, including the New Jersey Conference of Mayors, the New Jersey League of Municipalities and the Morris County Fire Academy.

The NJDOC also recognized an additional 22 individuals with a Commissioner’s Challenge Award. Challenge Awards were presented to members of the NJDOC Critical Incident Negotiation Team, which won the FBI/Somerset County “Best of the Best” crisis negotiation competition. Additional awardees include officers who administered first aid and safety and support under a variety of circumstances to citizens across the Garden State.

- Sergeant George Goldner, Garden State Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Lemuel Leeper-Tilghman, Northern State Prison/Custody Recruitment Unit
- SCPO Adrienne Campen, Garden State Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Michael Ambrozaitis, Garden State Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Brandon Canty, Garden State Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Thomas Harris, South Woods State Prison
- SCPO Chaz Melton, Garden State Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Louis Norcia, Mountainview Youth Correctional Facility
- SCPO Kenny Solorzano, Northern State Prison
- Lieutenant Bertha Lowery, Special Operations Group (SOG)

- Lieutenant Michael Scantling, SOG
- Sergeant David Kuperberg, SOG
- SCPO John Fell, SOG
- SCPO Cavan Golson, SOG
- SCPO Traci Iwaszkiewicz (retired), SOG
- SCPO Thomas Jones, SOG
- SCPO Kyle Priester, SOG
- SCPO Monica Rivera, SOG
- SCPO Vincent Tracy, SOG
- Education Supervisor Diane Patrick (retired), SOG
- Executive Assistant Joyce Ruffolo-Prior, SOG
- Teacher Kelly Scott, SOG

For more information about these events, please contact the NJDOC Public Information Office at 609-292-4036, x5662.

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