



June NEWSLETTER

VOL 4: ISSUE 6



MESSAGE FROM SHERIFF HERNANDEZ

I often say that every challenge presents an opportunity and this month, I experienced it yet again. Collaborative efforts between law enforcement, prosecutors and judges have resulted in fewer low-level offenders in our jail. In fact, our jail population is the lowest it has been since the 1990s. The reduced jail population is helping us protect against a COVID-19 outbreak, but it also left us with a challenge that literally sprouted up this month.

The Travis County Correctional Complex enjoys the benefits of a large, healthy vegetable garden. Inmate workers typically do the planting, weeding and harvesting as part of a job readiness program that teaches them job skills and earns them manual labor credits toward early release. Eligibility for the program requires a low-security risk classification and good standing behavior. Ample rain in March and April brought with it a bumper crop of veggies in the garden. It was time for harvest and we were short on inmate labor.

A call for help was sent out to employees. They signed up for 2-hour shifts and man, did they produce! It felt good to get our hands in the dirt and work together to bring in nature's bounty. We got really dirty and enjoyed the time together. I paused a few times long the way and listened to hearty laughter coming from a team of people who care about each other and about the mission and values of this incredible agency.

This unforeseen challenge brought us the opportunity to have a hand in harvesting nutritious food that fed inmates in our custody and was donated to the Central Texas Food Bank. In this newsletter, you can view photos from the harvest and check out the results of this year's crop.



MESSAGE ROCKS



We can all use a little more kindness and a reason to smile these days. This month, our deputies left message rocks in neighborhood parks, hiking trails and other public places throughout Travis County. If you find one, take a selfie and tag us, then leave it in a spot where someone else can discover it. Let's spread goodness and see all the places these rocks go! #TCSOCares



K-9s JOIN U.S. MARSHALS



On June 8th, two of our K-9 handlers were sworn in by the U.S. Marshal's Lone Star Fugitive Task Force. These deputies now have the authority to make federal arrests. Along with their K-9s, they will assist the marshals in fugitive apprehension.

GARDEN HARVEST



TCSO employees stepped up to volunteer for 2-hour shifts, harvesting the Travis County Correctional Complex (TCCC) garden. They brought in a total of 693 pounds of carrots, garden tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, Swiss chard and jalapeños. 366 pounds were used by the TCCC kitchen to feed inmates, and 327 pounds were donated to the Central Texas Food Bank, which provided 273 meals.

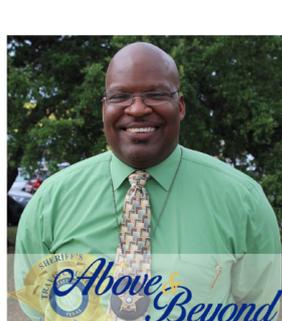


HONORING GRADUATES



Congratulations to all the area high school and college graduates! We're sorry COVID-19 wrecked your opportunity to enjoy traditional celebrations, but we enjoyed participating in all the innovative, alternate events we were invited to attend. We're proud of your achievement and honor you!

ABOVE & BEYOND



Detective Charles Smith has been with TCSO for 23 years. Through that time, Travis County and this agency have certainly seen a lot of changes and challenges. Most recently, we have been challenged to look deep within ourselves to determine if we are serving all residents with the utmost respect regardless of race. Charles took that call to heart, then took it one step further. He reached out to his supervisor to offer his perspective and assistance. Speaking for himself and other sworn peace officers, he encouraged us to do "more than guard stone and steel," but to also "collaborate and heal." That process is in motion, and we recognize and thank Charles for going above & beyond for the sake of the agency and the community he serves.



Cristina Warren is the TCSO Human Resources (HR) lead for all Family Medical Leave (FMLA) and Workers' Compensation claims. During the COVID-19 crisis, her duties have been extended to include the Family First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) as well as other COVID-19 related HR matters. A dramatic increase in reporting requirements and employee inquiries has made her work load significantly more burdensome; she has truly risen to the occasion. Her compassion and dedication to TCSO employee needs, whether it be FFCRA, FMLA, or Workers' Compensation, is exceptional. Cristina puts the "Human" in HR, and we're grateful for her steadfast reliability and loyalty to all of us here at TCSO.



On June 19th of every year, we proudly celebrate Juneteenth; when on that day in 1865, Union Major General Gordon Granger came to Galveston, TX to announce that the Civil War had ended and that people who had been enslaved were free. Unfortunately, this news arrived a whole two and a half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Juneteenth became an official Texas state holiday on January 1, 1980.

Due to COVID-19, we really missed gathering with the community this year and look forward to celebrating together as soon as possible.



NATIONAL DONUT DAY



Did you know that National Donut Day is an official holiday for the Salvation Army? In 1917, the Salvation Army "donut lassies" fried donuts in soldiers' helmets on the French front lines during World War I. The organization has celebrated that effort for over 100 years; commemorating it by bringing fresh donuts to community partners on the front lines.

We gratefully received donuts (aka: power rings!) from both the Salvation Army and the Neptune Society. It was a good day!



July 4th will be here soon and we hope you have a fun time celebrating. We also hope you'll use extreme caution if you decide to handle fireworks. We get a lot of questions about what is and isn't lawful in the county. Please be mindful if you reside within city limits or in the unincorporated areas of Travis County to abide by the appropriate laws/ordinances.

Here are some helpful resources:
[Austin Fire Department](#)
[Travis County Fire Marshal](#); [Fireworks Rules](#)
[Safety Tips](#)