COUNTY OF HUDSON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
AND REHABILITATION
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COUNTY EXECUTIVE

RONALD P. EDWARDS
DIRECTOR

It has been my privilege to serve the residents of Hudson County at the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Center as Director over the last two (2) years, an honor that has been the highlight of my twenty-seven (27) years with this Department. During that time, I have witnessed the impact of the changing times on the Department and have learned the importance of evolution in ensuring continued success. Over the course of the past few years, our Department has aligned a progressive and realistic 21st Century model of modern systems and procedures. Such, has focused on technological innovations, economic development, and on ensuring that our mission is at the forefront of everything we do. Our approach is strengthened by data and trends to reconnect our Department, and the individuals who pass through our institution, to the community that we serve.

The history of the Hudson County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation dates back to 1845, when a small stone jail house was constructed on a plot of land adjacent to the first Hudson County Court House. The jail was a three-story building containing “eight close cells and three-day cells, with suitable apartments for the jailer.” By 1870, a new Hudson County Penitentiary capable of housing 180 inmates was built at Snake Hill, at the southern end of what is now Secaucus. The penitentiary, which was part of a large county institutional complex, included an almshouse, an insane asylum, special quarantine hospitals, and a farm. Following years of controversy over the need for a new facility, the Freeholders of the County of Hudson finally announced plans to construct a new jail in January of 1926. The New Pavonia Avenue Jail was an imposing five-story monolith of granite and brick located on the north side of Pavonia Avenue opened on May 20, 1926 and accommodated approximately 250 inmates. Eventually, the Hudson County Penitentiary at Snake Hill closed its doors in 1953 after about 83 years of service following a roof collapse a year earlier. Fast forward about forty (40) years to 1990, when the new 768-cell Hudson County Correctional Facility opened in the southern tip of Kearny, New Jersey.

As a lifelong student of history, I mention the above to highlight the changes that have occurred since that first jail was built in our County in 1845. The facility has continued the progress, and on December 16, 2016, the Board of Chosen Freeholders of the County of Hudson voted unanimously to rename the Department of Corrections - the “Hudson County Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.” The change, as County Executive Thomas A. DeGise mentioned during the State of the County address; “proudly reflects the department’s 70 percent reduction in recidivism rates in its non-violent offender population over the last three years. It reflects our continuing efforts, in just the last few months, to make our prison gates even less of a ‘revolving door’.”

Our Department is committed to expanding the notion of corrections beyond simple incarceration to include education, community outreach, at-home confinement, work-release, adequate support and counseling. Our aim is to more effectively address the substantial underlying problems that lead to recidivism – chronic unemployment, drug addiction, and lack of healthcare access to deal with issues like mental illness and other chronic health issues. In pursuing this goal, I have come to a greater appreciation for the relative proximity of our Department to the larger community, even though the majority of our community will never even know that our jail exists. To that end, we assist those who have been committed to our care by putting them on the path to success in a way that meets their individual needs. Despite the multitude of obstacles and barriers that one may face upon release – our goal is to equip those who exit our institution with life & job skills – along with the confidence they need – to succeed and lead healthy and fulfilling lives.

In our care are the sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and parents of our citizens, and we are undoubtedly in a unique position to impact their lives by addressing the barriers some of our residents have to live a healthy and fulfilling life. I welcome anyone interested in learning about our department to reach out to me at redwards@hcnj.us. Thank you.

Yours, Always!

Ronald P. Edwards
Director
Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation