



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ten South Mississippi Correctional Institution Employees Receive Employee Recognition Awards

Leakesville – Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) Commissioner Robert L. Johnson presented recognition awards to ten South Mississippi Correctional Institution (SMCI) employees on Tuesday. SMCI Superintendent David Turner assisted Commissioner Johnson in presenting the awards. SMCI is located near Leakesville in Greene County.

“I count it both a privilege and an honor today to recognize this distinguished group of outstanding dedicated employees, on this special occasion,” said Commissioner Johnson. “MDOC’s employee awards program is a small token of our deep appreciation to employees for a job well done. Our agency is blessed with countless numbers of professional public servants who provide crucial security for the operation of our prison system.” Commissioner Johnson lauded all 3700 employees statewide for their courage and saluted them for their professionalism, their loyalty and for their untiring public service.

SMCI began its operation as a 500-bed medium security institution in April 1989. It presently has 550 people in its employ and the prison houses over 2100 offenders on a daily basis. SMCI has a capacity to house 2214 prisoners.

South Mississippi Correctional Institution employees receiving recognition awards for March 2002 included:

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|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Marcia Hicks Lucedale, MS | Correctional Services Aid SMCI- I Offender Services | Staff Employee of the Month |
| Ronda Johnson Buckatunna, MS | Correctional Officer I SMCI-I Area I | Correctional Officer of the Month |
| Jackie Miller State Line, MS | Correctional Supervisor SMCI III RID | Security Employee of the Month |
| Mark Bounds Wiggins, MS | Director of Vocational Training SMCI Area I | Extra Effort Award |
| James Johnson Buckatunna, MS | Deputy Warden SMCI Area I | Extra Effort Award |
| Dorothy Miller Leakesville, MS | Records Technician SMCI Area II | Extra Effort Award |
| William Bill Hormann Petal, MS | Chief Fiscal Officer SMCI Area I | Extra Effort Award |

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|---------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Dickie Wilkerson Leakesville, MS | Internal Audit Division SMCI Area II | Extra Effort Award |
| Charles Bailey Leakesville, MS | Warden Central Security SMCI Area III | Extra Effort Award |
| Joe Ray McNeal, Jr. Vanceleave, MS | Correctional Officer Trainee SMCI Area III | Heroism Award |

The 2:00 p.m. awards ceremony was held in SMCI II's visitation area. Superintendent David Turner announced the names of the award recipients as Commissioner Johnson presented each employee with lapel pins and certificates. Additionally, the Correctional Officer, the Security Employee, the Heroism Award recipient, and the Staff Employee of the Month were each presented plaques.

SMCI Superintendent Turner stated, "These monthly awards presentations are very significant. Each event affords us with an opportunity to pause and be thankful for our many dedicated employees. It is proper for us to recognize our staff for their dedication and their bravery."

South Mississippi Correctional Institution Awards Recipients

Marcia Hicks, Correctional Services Aid of Lucedale, a four-year veteran with the prison system, received the Staff Employee of the Month award at SMCI. Nominated by SMCI Area-I case manger Ben Bentsen, Hicks was characterized as being a highly dedicated employee. "Hicks plays an extremely important support role in the Offender Services Division," said Bentsen. "Her contributions are many and diverse and range from organizing training aids and providing forms to case managers to handling details assigned by the associate warden and assisting in the ongoing American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation efforts at the prison." Hicks was commended for being a role model for staff not only through her interpersonal skills but also through her outstanding work ethic.

Ronda Johnson, of Buckatunna, a 5-year veteran with the Mississippi Department of Corrections, received the Correctional Employee of the Month recognition award at SMCI. Nominated by Correctional Officer I Walter B. Porter, Johnson was saluted for her professionalism. "Officer Johnson is highly respected by her associates," said Porter. "She strives for excellence in all assignments she undertakes, regardless of their size or the degree of their importance. She has played a crucial role at Special Treatment Unit 8 where she serves as tower officer. She developed and implemented a filing system that is currently being used in both special treatment units at SMCI I." Johnson was praised for her enthusiasm and her team approach to her job and was saluted for her public service away from her regular job where she serves on a volunteer fire department in her community.

Jackie Miller, of State Line, received the Security Employee of the Month recognition award at SMCI. Nominated by Terri Denmark, Alcohol & Drug counselor, Correctional Supervisor Miller, a 13-year veteran at SMCI, and commander of SMCI's Regimented Inmate Discipline (RID), was praised for her leadership of the paramilitary program. "Miller is an outstanding administrator," said Denmark. "She is very professional in her dealings with her staff. She goes above the call of duty in her supervision of RID inmates and constantly encourages them to become productive citizens when they return to the free world." Miller was saluted for her dedication and her leadership and commended for the positive contribution in the rehabilitative efforts with RID offenders.

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Six employees were nominated by Deputy Commissioner Christopher Epps to receive Extra Effort employee recognition awards for their valuable contribution to SMCI's ACA accreditation project. They were:

Mark Bounds, of Wiggins, Director of Vocation, 12-year veteran
James Johnson, of Buckatunna, Deputy Warden, 13-year veteran
Dorothy Miller, of Leakesville, Records Technician, two-year veteran
William Hormann, of Petal, Chief Fiscal Officer, 13-year veteran
Dickie Wilkerson, of Leakesville, Internal Audit Division, three-year veteran, and
Charles Bailey, of Leakesville, Deputy Warden, 19-year veteran.

"Following our agency's announced plans to seek full American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation over a year ago, I formed a traveling audit team of highly knowledgeable veteran employees at SMCI. Their job was to assist MDOC's agency wide efforts to reach full accreditation by September 2002," said Deputy Commissioner Epps. "Because of this team's deep loyalty to corrections, outstanding progress has been made toward fruition of our goal to gain agency wide accreditation. The team has conducted five audits at different facilities to ensure that they are in compliance with agency policies and procedures. I'm confident that we will meet our September 2002 goal on schedule."

The audit team was commended for their invaluable assistance in the ACA effort and was saluted for their many long hours of hard work spent away from their jobs and homes to make the agency's goal a reality.

SMCI will be the lead prison in MDOC's ACA accreditation effort. A three-member ACA audit team is scheduled to begin a Standards Compliance Audit at SMCI on May 20. The auditors will complete their inspection of the total prison complex on May 22. The audit team will meet with prison officials at the conclusion of their inspection to discuss the results of the audit. SMCI officials hope to achieve compliance on ACA's standards criteria. The audit team will file their findings with ACA and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections (CAC). Contingent upon SMCI's receiving a satisfactory audit, prison officials hope to be awarded accreditation by the CAC in the late fall.

Joe Ray McNeal, Jr., a correctional officer from Vancleave, received MDOC's Heroism Award. Ginger Baldwin, a personnel officer at SMCI nominated McNeal for the special recognition award. McNeal, who joined SMCI's security staff in August 2001, was praised for his heroic act on January 7, 2002. McNeal arrived on the scene moments after officer Candice White lost control of her car after hitting an icy patch on the road. The vehicle struck a tree and flipped upside down. Officer White, still conscious, was suspended upside down by her seatbelt and shoulder harness in freezing weather. Unable to reach 911, Officer McNeal contacted SMCI and had an ambulance dispatched to the scene. He used his uniform shirt to apply pressure to a head wound on Officer White and continued to talk to her until paramedics arrived. "Officer McNeal's actions on January 7 are to be highly commended," said Baldwin "Had he not stopped on that cold January day, Officer White may very well have died from shock. He's a true hero."

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In addition, 7 employees were recognized for their years of service to MDOC. SMCI employees that reached a milestone in service years during December include:

| Name | Hometown | Years of Service |
|----------------|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Denver Glaizer | Gautier | 5 years |
| Ronda Johnson | Buckatunna | 5 years |
| Dianne Massey | Mobile | 5 years |
| Ruby Parnell | Leakesville | 10 years |
| Vincent Rials | Waynesboro | 10 years |
| Paul Greene | Lucedale | 15 years |
| Janice Guest | McLain | 20 years |

Media Note: If you would like a digital photograph of the service award recipients, e-mail kcrocker@mdoc.state.ms.us or call him at (601) 359-5616.