

*Albert Murray, Chairman; Terry Barnard, Vice Chairman;*

*Member James Donald; Member James Mills; Member Braxton Cotton*

**Fall 2013**

## STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

### Governor Appoints Braxton Cotton to the Parole Board

Representative Neal to lead Reentry Office; Robert Keller to Reentry

**B**raxton Cotton is the newest member of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. Governor Nathan Deal made the announcement November 1st that Cotton would join the Board November 15th. Cotton is the former Director of the Governor's Office of Transition, Support and Reentry.



**Braxton Cotton**

Cotton says he's humbled and very appreciative of this opportunity to serve.

"The Board's work is ultimately about public safety and reentry. I look forward to working in that capacity and to further the Governor's criminal justice reform agenda," stated Cotton.

Cotton was appointed executive director of the Governor's Office of Transition, Support and Reentry in June 2013. Prior to that, he was the executive director of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Cotton served in the Georgia State Patrol for five years. He also worked as a deputy sheriff and as a detective in the Baldwin County Sheriff's Department where he won the 2004 Officer of the Year Award. During his time in the U.S. Army, he was awarded the Army Achievement Medal. He has a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Saint Leo University (Fort McPherson) and is currently studying to obtain his master's in Public Policy.

State Representative **Jay Neal** is leaving the legislature to become the new director of the Office of Transition, Support and Reentry and Robert Keller leaves the Parole Board to become a deputy director in that office.

All of the leadership appointments are effective November 15th.

**Rep. Jay Neal** was first elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in November 2004 serving Walker and Catoosa counties. He is known for his work in spearheading criminal justice reform in Georgia. Neal served as vice chairman of the Insurance Committee, a member of the Education Subcommittee of Appropriations, a member of the Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee and a member of the Economic Development and Tourism Committee. He serves his local community as a board member of Yobel House, a residential drug treatment facility. He was also pastor of Gordon Lake Wesleyan Church until May 2009.



**Jay Neal**



**Robert Keller**

**Robert Keller** was appointed to the Parole Board in 2007 by Governor Perdue. He served as vice chairman for two years. Keller's stellar career includes serving as the Clayton County District Attorney for seventeen years. As he looks forward to his new position, Keller calls his work for the Board his most rewarding work.

"Determining whether an inmate is suitable for release, is an awesome responsibility that affects public safety. I always took extreme care when making those decisions," said Keller.

## Sex Offenders Under Close Supervision for Halloween

Sex offenders under parole supervision in Georgia are subjected to curfews or attending programming during Halloween. Again this year, parole officers conducted residence checks to ensure sex offenders did not participate in Halloween activities.

“Sex offenders in the community again were prohibited from decorating for Halloween, having outside lights turned on or answering the door (except for law enforcement) and giving out treats,” says Parole’s Field Operations Director David Morrison.

There are 1,148 sex offenders under parole supervision in Georgia. Morrison says the Parole Board’s efforts are about public safety.

“As a paroling authority, and as parole officers, it’s our job to ensure offenders in the community are in compliance and we want everyone to know we provide this measure of public safety during Halloween, so that parents feel safe and have no concerns as they enjoy Halloween activities,” stated Morrison.

Dusk to dawn curfews were in place for sex offenders on parole and compliance sweeps where officers visit the homes of sex offenders were conducted throughout the evening hours in most areas of the state.

In some areas of the state, sex offenders were directed to report to a facility or location and remain there during “trick or treating” hours. Parole and probation officers also attended some community group activities, conducting surveillance and ensuring sex offenders did not attend.

Families can check the Georgia Sex Offender Registry to determine where registered sex offenders live by going to: <http://gbi.georgia.gov/georgia-sex-offender-registry>.

(upper right photo) North Fulton Specialized Parole Officer Gerald Pearson and South Metro Specialized Parole Officer Taneshia Sims conducting Sex Offender Compliance Supervision.

(middle photo l-r, DeKalb Parole Office) Asst. Chief Parole Officer (ACPO) LaVonda Storey, ACPO Walter Singleton, Chief Parole Officer Solomon Barge and Specialized Parole Officer Kim Grant

(bottom photo) DeKalb Parole Officers conducting supervision.





## Compliance Operations

### Augusta, Savannah, Winder, Gwinnett

Field Operations participated in four joint law enforcement operations recently.

#### Augusta Joint Task Force Operation

September 18th and 19th, Augusta parole officers participated in the two-day warrant and compliance sweep in Augusta. Parole joined the Richmond County Sheriff's Office, State Probation (Dept. of Corrections) and the U.S. Marshal's Service in the operation.

During the two-day operation, 39 arrests were made, including five parolees. There were 26 probation arrests and eight civilian warrants served.

#### Winder Joint Task Force Operation

August 29th, Jefferson and Lawrenceville parole officers worked with the Winder Police Department, State Probation and the Barrow County Sheriff's Department to serve warrants and check compliance of offenders including sex offenders.

A total of six arrests were made including one parolee. All sex offenders on parole were found in compliance. A total of 34 face-to-face contacts were made with parolees under supervision.

#### Savannah Joint Task Force Operation

August 27th and 28th, Savannah and Statesboro parole officers conducted a sweep in Savannah. This task force was comprised of several agencies to include the Savannah Chatham Metro Police Department, State Probation, Chatham County Sheriff's Office, Eastern Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, Eastern Judicial Circuit Juvenile Court and Chatham County Counter Narcotics Team.

Forty-two arrests were made including five who were on parole.

#### Gwinnett County Joint Task Force Operation

Nineteen arrests were made during a one-day operation in Gwinnett County on August 28th.



Augusta Operation: Parole staff include Asst. Field Operations Director Jay Hancock, Northeast Regional Director Chris Barnett, Augusta Asst. Chief Parole Officer Julia Sancken and Asst. Field Operations Director James Williams

The Gwinnett County Sheriff's Department along with State Probation and parole officers from the Lawrenceville Parole Office conducted the sweep. One parolee was arrested during the operation.

Field Operations Director for the Parole Board, David Morrison says the joint operations not only support public safety through the arrest of offenders, but they also serve notice to offenders.

"We're attempting to serve warrants on parolees and other offenders to get those in violation off the streets. At the same time we make hundreds of face-to-face contacts and ensure compliance of supervision requirements by other offenders. This includes searching their residences and property to ensure they are abiding by the law," stated Morrison.

Morrison says parole will continue to be involved as the joint operations further relationships with other law enforcement and strengthen public safety.



Savannah Operation: Foreground are Savannah Asst. Chief Parole Officers Patrick Freightman and James Kopp, Statesboro Chief Parole Officer Paula O'Neal and Field Operations Director David Morrison

## Parole Officers graduate training in October

Twelve (12) new parole officers are among the 27 probation/parole officers who graduated during the Basic Probation/Parole Officer Training Course (BPPOTC) graduation ceremony on October 11. The graduation was held at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center (GPSTC) Auditorium in Forsyth.

The new parole officers are working in Atlanta, Columbus, LaFayette, La-Grange, Lawrenceville, Marietta, Savannah, Statesboro and Valdosta.

The BPPOTC is a nine (9) week training course resulting in all new officers being certified as Probation/Parole Officers by the Georgia Peace Officer Standards and Training Council (P.O.S.T.).

Under an agreement implemented in 2012, parole officers with the State Board of Pardons and Paroles and probation officers with the Department of Corrections have taken their basic training as part of one joint training program. Officers are trained to perform parole and probation supervision; however the officers only supervise offenders under their respective agency's authority.

In this class, fifteen graduates will work for the Department of Corrections as probation officers.

The course work includes supervision techniques, investigation procedures, intervention strategies, criminal and Georgia law, policy and procedure, interview skills, physical fitness, arrest procedures, defensive tactics, computer interaction and firearms qualification.

The Parole Board employs approximately 300 officers. The average parole caseload of offenders is 87.



New parole officers take the oath of office following their graduation ceremony on October 11, 2013.



Marietta Parole Officer Keith Davis was class president and delivered class comments at the BPPOTC graduation.





## Savannah Hosts First Victims Visitors' Day Since 2006

Nearly 150 victims and family members of victims attended the Victims Visitors' Day (VVD) in Savannah on September 19, 2013. It was the largest VVD since the State Board of Pardons and Paroles began visiting Georgia communities to meet with crime victims. The first VVD was held in 2006. This was the second visit to Savannah by the Parole Board, which first visited Savannah in 2006.

The Victims Visitors' Day was held in collaboration with the Chatham County District Attorney's Office, Victim-Witness Assistance Program.

All five Parole Board Members spent the day meeting with victims to hear about the crimes and the offenders.



"We listen," says Parole Board Chairman Albert Murray. "We talk little, but we listen a lot."

Murray says it's important for the Board Members to hear the information which is added to the offender file allowing all five board members to be able to review it.

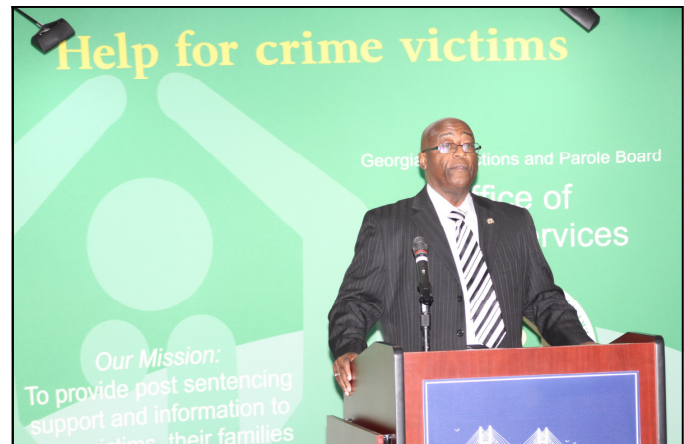
"We have victim impact statements, but these words we hear today make an impact," stated Murray.

Nearly 100% of the victims said their time was well spent during exit interviews. Overall victims rated customer service received at 96%.

More than 19-hundred victims and family members have attended the 19 Victims Visitors' Days held since 2006.

The Parole Board has visited the following cities:

Macon, Dalton, Savannah, Douglasville, Albany, Tifton, Augusta, Ellijay, Marietta, Columbus, Conyers, Forsyth, Lawrenceville and Valdosta.



(top photo l-r) Savannah Impact Program Director Terry Enoch, Savannah Police Major Richard Zapal, District Attorney Meg Heap, Mayor Edna Jackson, Parole Board Chairman Albert Murray, Chatham County Commissioner Helen Stone, Department of Corrections Operations, Planning and Training Division Director Arnold Smith and Savannah Police Majors Larry Branson and James Barnwell

(middle photo) Chairman Albert Murray speaks at the opening ceremony.

(bottom photo) Parole Board Vice Chairman Terry Barnard (on right) with Clemency Hearing Examiner Jacques Brown as they meet with a crime victim.



## Board helps celebrate milestone for Refuge of Hope

Refuge of Hope in Quitman, Georgia, celebrated a milestone on September 16, 2013, as a new multi-purpose building and chapel was opened. Refuge of Hope is a community partner of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles and provides services and housing to parolees and ex-offenders. Refuge of Hope is listed on both offender housing lists for the Parole Board, the Transitional Housing for Offender Reentry (THOR) registry and the Reentry Partnership Housing (RPH) registry.



(l-r) Parole Board Vice Chairman Terry Barnard, Chairman Albert Murray, Valdosta Chief Parole Officer Willie Carswell, Andy Squires (Refuge of Hope), Valdosta Parole Officer Ray Plunkett, Bonnie Squires (Refuge of Hope), Board Member James Donald, Parole Southwest Regional Director Caryl Deems, Valdosta Parole Officer Tyler Barkhaus and Valdosta Assistant Chief Parole Officer Laura Weaver



Parole Board Chairman Albert Murray cuts the ribbon on the new multi-purpose building for Refuge of Hope.

Offenders who enter Refuge of Hope may complete substance abuse treatment and other programs while staying at the facility.

Refuge of Hope has a faith-based twelve step recovery program. Other services include job training and technical training to assist offender employment opportunities.

Parole Board Chairman Albert Murray was joined by Vice Chairman Terry Barnard and Board Member James Donald at the ribbon cutting ceremony.

## Faith-Based Partnerships

The Parole Board has expanded and strengthened its relationships with faith-based service providers throughout the state of Georgia.

Faith-based service providers help address the gaps in services not traditionally covered by Parole Board programming. These partnerships offer emotional support, counseling, mentoring, food, clothing, housing, corrective thinking, employment preparation and many other services to assist the parolee with his/her successful re-entry into the community.

The Board has established partnerships with more than seventy faith-based housing providers and 211 non-housing faith-based service providers throughout the state. To ensure these partnerships continue to grow and produce positive results, the Board has identified five parole officers from across the state (Michael Austin, Leah Lewis, Sharita Somner, Othello Vaughn, Kelvin Hawkins) to serve as liaisons between the faith-based community and the Parole Board. These officers will seek out faith-

(cont. next page...)



## Faith Based Partnerships cont.

based partnership opportunities and service resources for parolees and their families to aide in the re-entry process.

In addition, the Board has provided greater access to faith-based resource guides for the supervising parole officers. Officers are now better-equipped to match the

need of the parolee with the resources available in their community, improve the success of parolees, aide their families, and enhance public safety.



Chief Parole Officer Kelvin Hawkins, Parolee Anderson Williams and Pastor Theodus Drake

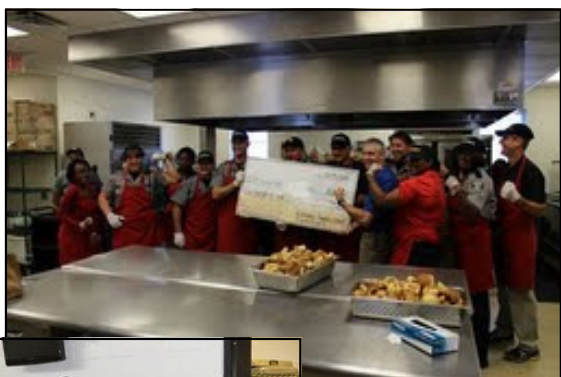
The Second Mt. Zion Baptist Church and Zion Outreach Ministries in Albany partners with the Parole Board to assist offenders leaving prison but who need help.



Braxton Cotton attended the August meeting of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles. Cotton joined the Board on November 15th as Robert Keller joined the Governor's Office of Transition, Support and Reentry.

Pictured above: (l-r) Parole Board Member James Mills, Vice Chairman Terry Barnard, Chairman Albert Murray, Braxton Cotton, Board Members Robert Keller and James Donald

(see article page 1 - Governor appoints Cotton to the Parole Board)



Augusta Parole Officer Nechelle Norman participated with Richmond County Sheriff's Office in the Golden Harvest Food Bank on

October 15. The food bank provides meals to the homeless. Norman is in the center of the bottom photo.



Board Member James Mills and his sons attended the Sunday night service at Phillips State Prison on October 27th. (l-r) Malachi Mills, Micah Mills and Board Member James Mills.



## 2013 Third Quarter Employee Recognition



**Drusilla Robinson, Clemency  
CONS Team Member** with  
Board Member Robert Keller and  
Parole Board Chairman Albert  
Murray



**Above: Community Partner of the  
Quarter, Dr. Susan Strickland,  
Louise's House**  
**Left: Clemency Hearing Examiner  
Barbara Neville**



### **Clemency Hearing Examiner Team**

(l-r) Board Chairman Albert Murray, Steve Baustin, Marsha Hopkins, Chris Glover, George Walker, Lisa Copeland, Scott Reeves, Barbara Neville, Jacques Brown, Patricia Johnson, Crystal Moon, Randall Wright, Kitty Shultz, Mandy Kimner, Tiffany Clark, Tabettha Rand, Genevin Upshaw, Executive Director of Parole Michael Nail and Board Member Robert Keller





## 2013 Third Quarter Employee Recognition



**Patricia Cox, Senior Secretary, Dalton Parole Office** with Board Member Robert Keller and Parole Board Chairman Albert Murray



Above: **Human Resources Benefits Coordinator Myra Sistrunk** with HR Director Jesse Johnson and Board Member Robert Keller and Board Chairman Albert Murray



Above: **Southeast Region Secretary Gail Martin**, Southeast Regional Director Darryl McGee with Board Member Robert Keller and Board Chairman Albert Murray

Right: **DeKalb Parole Officers Derrika Richardson and Keir Chapple** with Board Member Robert Keller and Board Chairman Albert Murray



# STATE BOARD OF PARDONS AND PAROLES

## ***Our Mission***

*To serve the citizens of Georgia as an integral component of the Criminal Justice System by making informed release considerations and protecting the public through effective offender supervision.*

## ***Our Vision***

*To be the most efficient and effective paroling agency in the nation.*

## ***Our Core Values***

*We value Ethics, Integrity, Fairness and Honesty.*

FIFTH FLOOR, EAST TOWER  
FLOYD VETERANS  
MEMORIAL BUILDING  
2 MARTIN LUTHER KING,  
JR., DRIVE, S.E.  
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## PROMOTIONS

Assistant Chief Parole Officer Neal Carney moved to ACPO of the South Metro Parole Office (returning from a professional development assignment with the Dept. of Corrections)

Kim Patton Johnson promoted to Senior Field Operations Officer

Craven Goodman promoted to Thomaston Chief Parole Officer

## Clemency Realignment



Thurman Henderson, Asst.  
Director/Pardon Administration/Scanning/Imaging



Carrie Goldring (left), Asst. Director/CONS and  
Joje Wilson-Gibbs, Asst. Director/Considerations

Earlier this summer Clemency Division Director Melodee Stewart announced a realignment of the division and necessary leadership additions aimed at sustaining improvements made within the division's major work functions.

The Clemency Division is responsible for the parole decision making process, however there are many functions within the division that must be completed in order for that process to work properly. As a result Stewart announced Carrie Goldring will serve as Assistant Director of Clemency Operations. A major function is supervising the CONS (Clemency Online Navigation System) Teams. CONS is the electronic case file management system. Cases are prepared in CONS for the Board's consideration. CONS replaced the old paper file system and now all offender files are prepared electronically.

Joje Wilson-Gibbs is serving as Assistant Director of Clemency Considerations. Wilson-Gibbs will supervise the Clemency Hearing Examiners and the Parole Investigators. Hearing Examiners send the Board Members a recommendation

regarding possible parole after applying the Parole Decision Guidelines to the offender's case. Parole Investigators investigate offender's histories. That information is included in the offender's case file and used by the Hearing Examiners as they make the recommendation to the Board. The Parole Investigators were moved to the Clemency Division from Field Operations in 2011 because their work is more aligned with information included in the offender's case file.

Additionally, Thurman Henderson is the Assistant Director supervising Pardon Administration, another major Clemency function of the agency. Pardon Administration also has undergone major changes resulting in a more efficient application and decision making process. Henderson also leads the scanning/imaging team which has resulted in paper files (with the exception of lifer files) being imaged and made electronic. Henderson is the agency contact for district attorney and judge correspondence as well.

Michael Nail, Executive Director of Parole applauds the changes saying, "These are necessary improvements and it's a great team Melodee has assembled. We are proud of what's being accomplished in Clemency."