



AMERICAN PROBATION AND  
PAROLE ASSOCIATION

# 2023 APPA AWARD WINNERS

## **CARMEN RODRIQUEZ MEMBER OF THE YEAR**

**Debaja Coleman** - *Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice*

Ms. Coleman embodies the essence of the award and the spirit of its namesake. I remember Ms. Coleman's first APPA conference and the excitement she had when she joined the Juvenile Justice committee. She jumped right in with reviewing workshops for the next Institute and working on the Juvenile Justice Position paper. Ms. Coleman began to broaden her network of colleagues while assimilating their wealth of knowledge in her daily work. Her work in APPA was not confined to the Juvenile Justice Committee but also to the Diversity Committee. As a member, she brought new ideas and challenged committee members to focus on the true nature of diversity not only with our clientele but with the members of APPA. As the co-chair of the Diversity committee, DeBaja has worked to ensure that diversity remains at the forefront of APPA's institutes with panel discussions and quality workshops speaking current practices, trends, and challenges in diversity, equity, and inclusion. Ms. Coleman encouraged and ensured committee members to write quality and informative articles on DEI for organization publication- Perspectives. Her enthusiasm for APPA is also seen in her work as the Georgia Area Representative. She began working to recruit new members from various fields within corrections. One of the areas she has devoted her efforts to is increasing Student and recently-graduates of parole and probation classes. Ms. Coleman utilizes her networking skills to visit the graduating classes of parole & probation officers with Department of Corrections, Department of Community Supervision, and Department of Juvenile Justice and visit area colleges and universities for criminal justice classes. During her visits, Ms. Coleman introduces the APPA organization to the trainees and students while encouraging them to take advantage of the one-year membership. Ms. Coleman routinely sends email APPA updates and reminders to the Georgia membership. Recently, Ms. Coleman took the lead in organizing the Volunteers and coverage for the 2022 Winter Institute in Atlanta, GA as well as coordinated the first Community Correction Career Fair hosted by the DEI committee. Her ability to organize the volunteers and ensure all areas were covered contributed to the success of the 2023 Winter regionals. Ms. Coleman's dedication to increasing awareness of APPA, engaging members on current trends in the field of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion as well as connecting practitioners with an organization that is a leading voice in community corrections is admirable and merits recognition.

## **SCOTIA KNOUFF LINE OFFICER OF THE YEAR**

**Mark Belaney** - *Parole Officer in Ashtabula County in Ohio*

As a Parole Officer Mark consistently performs his assigned duties in an outstanding manner, which has resulted in him being named Ohio Adult Parole Authority's Parole Officer of the year for 2022. He makes a significant contribution to community safety by serving on the US Marshalls North-East Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force and the FBI Safe Streets Task Force. Mark is a balanced officer who demonstrates his passion for change by facilitating Decision Points Cognitive Behavior Program groups. He collaborates regularly with community providers and has become a go to person when there is a community need, including regular participation in Citizen's circles. He partners with the area prison to increase reentry success through the Lake Erie Corrections Institution's Community Relations Committee. PO Belaney has always been passionate about Critical Incident Management (CIM), since his employment as a Case Manager for one of Ohio's private prisons. This year, Mark revamped the CIM curriculum and trained the entire Akron Region, highlighting the capabilities of CIM to be scalable for use in the Ohio Adult Parole Authority. He received many compliments from Parole Officers, supervisors, and special staff for his ability to make CIM relevant to their situation.



## **PRESIDENT'S AWARD**

### **Florida Department of Corrections**

Being one of the largest agencies in the nation has not held back the Florida Department of Corrections from developing effective, innovative approaches that are going to define the future of how we do business in community corrections. FDC has implemented several initiatives that focus on the success of those on supervision and positive reinforcement incentives to support positive outcomes of supervision. The most notable, groundbreaking implementation of FDC is the Mobile Probation Unit (MPU). The MPU is a 25-foot bus that is equipped with three workstations that allow individuals under supervision to report at remote locations. All mission-critical activities can be performed on the MPU, just as if the individual were reporting to the probation office. This unit has provided the means for those who have transportation issues to remain compliant, leading to a decrease in technical violations for failing to report to the probation office. Another community-based innovative approach to supervision that FDC has initiated is the implementation of a bicycle supervision unit in Tampa, Florida. This novel approach strengthens the relationship with law enforcement and enables FDC community corrections to have a positive presence in the community. The third extraordinary innovative initiative that FDC developed is the F.A.C.E. I.T. program. It was found that a good portion of individuals under supervision violate their terms of supervision within the first few months of supervision. To counteract this, the F.A.C.E. I.T. program was developed to address early violations of those new to supervision. The program targets those who are in their first 30 to 60 days of supervision and focuses on the correlation between successful supervision outcomes and the acronym F.A.C.E. I.T. which stands for family, attitude, communication, employment, improvement, and taking responsibility. Throughout the state of Florida, this program is flourishing, and compliance rates are increasing. FDC's most recent initiative has been the adoption of the Reentry Simulation. The Reentry Simulation is fashioned after a board game where it mimics the challenges and obstacles of justice-involved individuals. The next strategic use of technology is the Interactive Offender Tracking System (IOTS). The IOTS program not only is an incentive for those under supervision but also serves to reduce officer workload. This program is currently for low-risk individuals who are compliant with their supervision by reducing their obligation to report to the probation office in person. This state-of-the-art program captures the individuals' voice biometrics to ensure the individual under supervision is the individual making the telephone report. An automated system is used to capture and document the monthly report and updates residence and employment changes. FDC has also provided incentives for those individuals who are on intensive supervision such as Community Control also known as House Arrest. FDC has created a Merit Based Activity (MBA) program. This program allows officers to provide incentives to those who are compliant with supervision and have taken steps to improve their selves. It rewards individuals by allowing activities that normally would not be acceptable under this restrictive supervision. In addition, through collaboration with Reform Alliance, the state of Florida has been successful in the passing of Senate Bill 752 which allows for incentive gain time when an individual under supervision makes an educational achievement or maintains stable employment. For each educational achievement, an individual under supervision may have 60 days taken off their total time on supervision. If an individual maintains stable full-time employment for 6 consecutive months, the individual may have 30 days taken off their supervision for every 6 months. This groundbreaking new law supports what research dictates; having education and employment dramatically increases successful supervision outcomes. The agency leads the nation in pioneering ideas that strengthen community corrections on a state, national and international level.

## **WALTER DUNBAR MEMORIAL AWARD**

### **Joseph Russo - National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center**

Joe has been a constant contributor to the work of APPA through various leadership roles with the Board of Directors and numerous committees. He stays up to date on the latest trends and hot topics in our field and is always willing to share his knowledge. Mr. Russo served as the secretary of the association for two years and did an amazing job of keeping us on track and focused. He ensured items which needed action did not fall through the cracks and always volunteered to help. Joe was instrumental in assisting with the rewrite of the APPA Constitution 2 years ago following a vote to change the structure of the Board of Directors. APPA has greatly benefited from Joe's work ethic and commitment to APPA for many years, having served as the secretary of the association from 2019-2021, long-time member of the technology committee, and an individual member throughout much of his career. During his time as the secretary of the board, there are few who worked as hard as Joe. He helped to rewrite our constitution and was a vital member of many committees and work groups which helped to accomplish the goals of our organization. And despite no longer serving directly on the board, he continues to support the organization through work with the technology committee and other special projects.