



MISSISSIPPI
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
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PRESS RELEASE

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MDOC NAMES MSP COMMANDER LARRY HARRIS EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Jackson – Yesterday, the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC) presented the agency's ninth annual Employee of the Year award to Mississippi State Penitentiary Commander Larry Harris. Harris, who has been employed with MDOC since 1976, is a Correctional Commander who serves as Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Director and Emergency Response Team (ERT) Commander at Parchman. He received the award at the Commissioner's Annual Statewide Meeting which honored more than a hundred MDOC employees.

Hired on May 24, 1976, Harris began his career as a Correctional Officer and has worked his way through the ranks to his current position of Correctional Commander. Harris has accomplished much during his tenure with the agency. He was instrumental in the development of the ERT in the 1980's. Harris has received countless certificates and is proficient in response to suicide bombing attacks, criminal intelligence, terrorist threats, defensive tactics and rapid response. Commander Harris believes that "the challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not arrogant."

"His leadership and organization skills have been invaluable to MSP. He exhibits qualities that are essential to the mission of the agency. He is reliable, devoted, passionate, enthusiastic, cheerful and a pleasure to work with," said Deputy Commissioner of Institutions Emmitt Sparkman.

Lieutenant Governor Phil Bryant was the featured speaker at the event, which included Mr. John Miller of Mississippi Prison Industries Corporation (MPIC) as well as MPIC board members, legislators, corrections employees, parole board members and family and friends of the five nominees of the Employee of the Year award.

MDOC initiated the employee recognition awards program in 2001 and hosted the first Employee of the Year event in 2002 to honor employees who received employee awards during the previous year. Acknowledging that the business of corrections is an absolute necessity in the field of criminal justice, Lt. Governor Bryant said to the employees of MDOC, "If law enforcement is the tip of the sword, you all are surely the handle."

"MDOC is only as strong and effective as its employees. These 5 honorees are worthy of this year's nominations as they have earned the recognition by distinguishing themselves among their peers and setting the right examples, making an impact on others with proven, tested judgment and capabilities," said MDOC Commissioner Christopher Epps during Tuesday's ceremony. "Our mission of providing and promoting public safety is not an easy task. This is achieved by using sound correctional principles and standards. The honorees have successfully put into action those principles and those standards."

Commissioner Epps and the MDOC executive staff recognized MDOC employees in calendar year 2009 for their daily dedication and hard work in maintaining public safety through offender care, custody, control and treatment. Employees were selected from the Mississippi State Penitentiary, Central Mississippi Correctional Facility, South Mississippi Correctional Institution, the Community Corrections Division and Central Office as the Employee of the Year nominees.

The five nominees for the MDOC Employee of the Year were:
James Johnson, Field Officer III, Community Corrections, Region III
Annette White, Personnel Officer III, Central Office
Vivian Frazer, Lieutenant, Central Mississippi Correctional Facility
Larry Harris, Commander, Mississippi State Penitentiary
Shelia Hill, Commander, South Mississippi Correctional Institution

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Media Note: For photos of the event, please contact Kent Crocker at 601.359.5689 or kcrocker@mdoc.state.ms.us.