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## SOMERSET COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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### 2023 Sheriff's Office Annual Report



Dale P. Lancaster  
Sheriff

January 1, 2024 begins my 9<sup>th</sup> year as your Sheriff. I want to personally thank everyone for your continued support for the Somerset County Sheriff's Office. It is a privilege to serve the citizens of Somerset County.

The Office of Sheriff oversees the operations of the County Jail, law enforcement, court security, and civil process. Somerset County is approximately 4,000 square miles. The County is comprised of 27 towns, 6 plantations, and 83 unorganized townships. This year, I completed my 2-year term as President of the Maine Sheriff's Association. I continue my appointment to the Board of Directors for the New England State Police Information Network. I am also a board member for the Statewide County Corrections Professional Standards Council.

I would like to report that in May of 2023, the Somerset County Sheriff's Office was awarded accreditation through the Maine Law Enforcement Accreditation Program. The Sheriff's Office law enforcement policies and procedures are best practice for the State of Maine. I want to take this opportunity to thank staff and Deputies for their diligent efforts to obtain this accreditation.

In 2023, our Agency has aggressively participated in job fairs, advertising and increasing our pay scale to make us competitive with other Agencies in hiring and retaining men and women to work as Deputies and Corrections Officers.

#### Law Enforcement

The Patrol division is comprised of 15 Patrol Deputies and 3 Sergeants. Through funding from the State of Maine, we have 2 Deputies dedicated to patrolling the unorganized townships. The Patrol division is overseen by a Lieutenant. The Criminal division is comprised of 4 Detectives, 1 Domestic Violence Investigator assigned to the Somerset County District Attorney's Office, and is overseen by a Lieutenant. The Sheriff's Office continues to partner with MDEA (Maine Drug Enforcement Agency) to have an agent assigned to the Criminal Division. Presently, that position is not filled. The Patrol division has 2 trained accident re-constructionists. The Sheriff's Office has 2 canines, a canine assigned to each division. The Sheriff's Office assigns 1 Deputy per shift to patrol the Town of Madison. We have a Secretary/Dispatcher assigned to Madison.

Currently, we have 1 Deputy attending the 46th Basic Law Enforcement Training Program (BLETP) at the Maine Criminal Justice Academy.

Throughout 2023, the Sheriff's Office Criminal Division investigated a large volume of illicit drug trafficking activities. The Sheriff's Office obtained and executed numerous drug search warrants, which subsequently led to the arrest and conviction of numerous people from Maine and out of State on various Federal and State level drug trafficking charges. Illegal drugs, in particular Fentanyl, and illegal marijuana grows, continue to be a significant issue in Somerset County. The Criminal Division dedicates a large amount of time and resources to combat this problem. The Criminal Division investigated numerous serious felony level cases to include robberies, burglaries, thefts, scams, aggravated assaults, unattended deaths, and sexual abuse cases. In 2023, the Crimes Against Persons Detective investigated 23 sex offense complaints. 11 of those cases involved child sexual abuse where forensic interviewing was utilized. Detective Jeremy Leal is a Children's Advocacy Center forensic interviewer. As a result of these investigations, and working with the District Attorney's Office prosecuting these cases, we were able to get substantial sentences in a number of child abuse cases. The Sheriff's Office Criminal Division tracks individuals who are required by law to register as sex offenders. 2 individuals were charged with Sex Offender Registration Notification Act violations.

#### Jail

The Somerset County Jail, when operating at full capacity, operates with 36 budgeted Correctional Officers, 8 Shift Supervisors, 3 cooks, 12 program and support staff, and 9 administrative staff. In October, 2023 Major Michael Pike, was selected to be the Jail Administrator. The County Jail is now 16 years old. With the use of funds received through



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the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, we anticipate that the Jail bond will be paid off within 1 year. The County Jail is nationally accredited through the American Correctional Association and is operating under nationally accepted best practice standards. The County Jail is also PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) certified. In 2023, the Somerset County Jail recorded 1,278 total bookings, a 21% increase from 2022. We are currently still working with the State of Maine in administering Sublocade to inmates who identify with an Opioid Use Disorder. The Programs department implemented many new initiatives in 2023, including the inmate garden project, the return of the inmate newsletter and Christmas card program. The Jail has partnered with the Family Violence Project and the Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Center to provide services to inmates who are survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

The starting salary for a new, inexperienced Corrections Officer, increased to \$21.23 in 2023. The Jail also implemented a new initiative to allow us to hire experienced Corrections Officer at a higher rate of pay based on up to 8 years of experience. Recruitment and hiring initiatives continue to be ongoing.

### Civil Process

In 2023, the Somerset County Sheriff's Office Civil Deputies received 1,723 papers to process and serve. That is a 10% decrease from 2022.

### Calls for Service

- In 2023, the Sheriff's Office received 18,277 total calls for service from our residents. This represents a 0.22% increase from 2022.
- During 2023, the Sheriff's Office responded to 350 calls for service from the Town of Smithfield, which is a 30% increase from 2022. These calls included 48 motor vehicle accidents, 12 motor vehicle stops, 6 domestic disturbances, 8 calls requesting citizen assistance, as well as calls for theft, criminal threatening, harassment, scams, welfare checks, and other requests for police services.

