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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUTNAM COUNTY, TN – Improvements Made in Putnam County Jail

At 12:01 a.m. on the morning of September 1, 2014, Putnam County's newly elected Sheriff and his new Jail Administrator Tim Nash were meeting individually with each and every one of the inmates inside the Putnam County Jail. Their mission was to find out who was booked into the jail, what they were in for, and what was good, bad or indifferent about the jail. This marked a radical new approach for an incoming Sheriff and his administration team.

"It was important to us that we have their respect and confidence," said Sheriff Eddie Farris. "We started a rapport that night that has helped us to improve living conditions and reduce negative incidents within the jail, which ultimately serves the public interest because there is less vandalism and destruction of jail property."

Based on these initial interviews, Sheriff Farris and Major Nash were able to identify some immediate needs and have acted quickly to address them. As a result, the interior of the jail was completely repainted by the inmates, and within a week of taking office the Sheriff added a third meal for inmates, kitchen equipment was upgraded, the time-keeping system was revamped, and many new programs were added for inmates.

"Hungry inmates can get grumpy and are more prone to breaking things," stated Major Tim Nash, Jail Administrator. "The third meal has helped tremendously with morale. Even if it is only a sandwich, chips and cookies, it helps keep our inmates from feeling hungry and they are more willing to participate in other more productive activities."

Some of the new programs that have been started and/or expanded since September 1st include: enhanced work crews for men involving trash pickup, mowing and work at the county recycling center; a new work crew program for women involving painting of county buildings and/or non-profit organizations, washing/detailing of school buses at a county facility, and general groundskeeper jobs; expanded exercise programs within the jail; GED classes with the potential for some used computers from the Putnam County School System, Parenting Classes, meetings sponsored by the local AA chapter, Celebrate Recovery meetings (a faith-based recovery program), and God's Jail Ministry.

"We are currently looking at a new program proposed by Life Church in Cookeville," said Nash. "They have offered to bring televisions into the jail so that they can broadcast church services to the inmates. They are also looking at purchasing vans to potentially transport inmates to their church services. We are currently researching similar programs in other counties before making the decision about whether or not to offer this here in Putnam County. According to studies by the jails who have instituted similar programs, these programs have significantly reduced the recidivism (return) rates at their jails."

"Earning the Public Trust Every Day!"

“Being a former jail administrator myself, I can tell you that Major Nash has the hardest job at the Sheriff’s Office,” said Sheriff Farris. “The operation, maintenance, and continued certification of a direct supervision jail is the most challenging task facing any Sheriff’s Office in Tennessee. I really appreciate the fine job that Major Nash is doing and I am proud to have him on my team.”

“In fact, I am very proud of my entire team. We would not be where we are today without a lot of hard work by every person in the Sheriff’s Office. All aspects of the department have improved due to the total dedication and buy-in by every member of my team.”

“Inmates are sentenced by the courts but it’s our job to protect them from the citizens and each other while serving that sentence. It is not up to us to decide their punishment, however, we do have rules and we expect inmates to follow the rules while they are incarcerated in our facility. With strong oversight, new leadership, and properly trained personnel, the citizens of Putnam County can be assured that the jail is being properly operated and maintained and is becoming a cleaner and safer environment for all detainees,” added Farris.

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