



OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

1 DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE
ROOM 456, CITY HALL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102



Ross Mirkarimi
SHERIFF

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CONTACT: Kenya Briggs

Office: 415-554-7247

Cell: 415-850-8046

Email: kenya.briggs@sfgov.org

Lauding Its Accomplishments, Harvard University Presents SF Sheriff's Department's Five Keys Charter High School with Top Government Innovator Award; Bestows \$100K to Further Recidivism-Reducing Programing for County Jail Inmates

San Francisco, CA – Lauding its forward-thinking programs, like a recently launched vocational aquaponics training program at County Jail #5, representatives from Harvard University today, flanked by San Francisco Sheriff's Department (SFSD) Command Staff, presented Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi and SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School Executive Director Steve Good, with the University's prestigious 2015 Innovations in American Government (IAG) Award -- for Five Keys' outstanding contributions to education in California's county jail system.

"On behalf of the San Francisco Sheriff's Department and our Five Keys Charter High School, it is with deep gratitude and immense pride that we receive Harvard University's Innovation in American Government Award," stated Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi. "What we are doing in our jails, and in under-served communities, is not effortlessly issuing diplomas in redemption, but rather, recognizing that bad mistakes, poor decisions and missed opportunities, do not define the people who enter into our custody. Education can change the world, and for some, that begins -- or restarts -- from within our jail."

Selected for vanguarding some of government's most urgent challenges, SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School prevailed over a field of 450 other applicants to win both the award and \$100,000 in grant monies. Some of the school's newest initiatives include a popular in-jail aquaponics program through which inmates plan, plant, and harvest vegetables and qualify for post-release employment opportunities in aquaponics farming, and an in-custody and post-custody community college program launched in collaboration with City College of San Francisco. The SFSD is the only law enforcement agency in the nation to win the Harvard's IAG award twice – the department's Resolve to Stop the Violence accepted the award in 2004.

"It is my hope that through honoring this impressive program, jurisdictions across the country can benefit from Five Keys' efforts to end the cycle of incarceration, to provide education to all those who are willing to learn, and to work together to create an inclusive society," said Ms. Marty Mauzy, Executive Director of the Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard.

PHONE: 415-554-7225 FAX: 415-554-7050

WEBSITE: WWW.SFSHERIFF.COM

EMAIL: SHERIFF@SFGOV.ORG

"Access to high quality education is not only a social justice issue, for the men and women who are incarcerated it is an opportunity to improve their chances of successful reentry to the community," added Steve Good, Executive Director for SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School. "Receiving this prestigious award from Harvard University validates the work our teachers and deputies do every day as part of an important public safety initiative."

Founded in 2003, Five Keys is the first public charter high school in the U.S. to operate in an adult detention facility. Infusing the "key" ideals of community, family, recovery, education, and employment into its curriculum, Five Keys Charter High School's positive impact reaches beyond the walls of its jail-embedded classrooms to 21 community centers throughout San Francisco and 13 in Los Angeles — serving over 9,000 students annually.

Providing inmates with an education helps create safer communities, reduces tax dollars spent on incarceration, and affords inmates the skills they'll need to rejoin communities and their families upon release. Recidivism rates for inmates who go through the Five Keys program is 28% based on re-arrest for a new felony charge. (The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's 2013 Outcome Evaluation Report shows that the total three-year recidivism rate for all felons released during fiscal year 2008-2009 is 61%, with nearly 50 percent of those inmates going back into jail or prison within the first six months.)

In addition to the Innovations in American Government Award, SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School is also the recipient of the 2015 Pioneer Institute Better Government Completion and the 2014 Hart Vision Award for Charter School of the year (Northern California).

The Innovations in American Government Awards is the nation's preeminent program devoted to recognizing and promoting excellence and creativity in the public sector. The program highlights exemplary models of government innovation and advances efforts to address the nation's most pressing public concerns. Since its inception in 1985, the IAG awards program has received over 27,000 applications and recognized nearly 500 government initiatives.

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