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Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi Announces SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School a Finalist for Prestigious Innovations in American Government Award

Program Chosen for Helping Inmates Achieve High School Diplomas and GED's, Reducing Recidivism Rates at County Jails

San Francisco, CA – San Francisco Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi and Five Keys Charter School Executive Director Steve Good today announced that the Five Keys Charter School, a nationally groundbreaking program of the San Francisco Sheriff's Department (SFSD), has been named a finalist for the Harvard Kennedy School's prestigious Innovations in American Government Award. Selected for vanguarding innovative approaches that address some of government's most urgent challenges, SFSD's Five Keys Charter School and four other finalists will compete for the award's coveted \$100,000 grant.

"This is a huge honor made possible by our visionary and hardworking staff who are pushing the envelope to meaningfully lower recidivism," said Sheriff Ross Mirkarimi. "Historically, within the U.S. prison and jail systems, opportunities prove few in providing ex-offenders hope through a working skill. However, those times are changing, as evidenced by the durable reach of the SFSD's Five Keys Charter High School whose common sense approach to improving public safety is by not letting incarcerated minds decay."

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 five ideals of community, family, recovery, education and employment into its curriculum, Five Keys' 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.

"It's incredibly rewarding for the teachers of Five Keys to be recognized on a national stage for the important work they do with such a challenging population," said Five Keys Executive Director, Steve Good. "Five Keys represents the best of what can happen when law enforcement and educators combine efforts to improve public safety by reducing the likelihood that an incarcerated individual will reoffend."

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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.)

San Francisco Sheriff's Department's programs are no strangers to accolades, including those of the Harvard Kennedy School. SFSD's Resolve to Stop the Violence Program won the Innovations in American Government Award in 2004. Last year, Five Keys was conferred the Hart Vision Award for Charter School of the Year (Northern California).

Sheriff Mirkarimi and Mr. Good will travel to Cambridge later this month for the awards committee's final review of the finalists. The 2015 Innovations in American Government Award winner will be announced this summer.

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