



## **For Immediate Release**

Easton, MD – September 28, 2021

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### **Corrections Case Manager Helps Talbot County Detention Center Inmate Get Her Diploma**

By Amelia Blades Steward

Although small in stature, Amanda Tondin, a Case Manager with the Talbot County Department of Corrections, commands respect from her peers and has a huge heart for the inmate population she serves. Recently she helped an 18-year-old female inmate get her high school diploma – an important completer step toward the inmate’s future.

“I was a first-generation college student myself. I understand wanting to do something to make your family proud,” Tondin reflects about the recent year helping inmate Ty’Mereah Camper of Cambridge reach her goals.

Tondin was raised in Easton and graduated from Easton High School and then completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from York College in York, Pa.

In high school, Tondin had an interest in criminal justice. After college, she was a clerk in a judicial center in York, Pa., but decided she wanted more hands-on work in her field. She did an internship with the Talbot County Sheriff’s Department and in 2019 saw an opening for a corrections officer in Talbot County.

“I told my mom what I was about to do as we were watching the television show, ‘Scared Straight.’ She was worried about me doing it, but has been supportive,” Tondin adds.

“I wasn’t sure what I was getting into. As part of taking the job, I attended the Corrections Academy and then began working on the floor of the jail every day. In the course of working, I had to find my own voice with the inmates.”

She credits her supervisor, Cindy Green, the Department’s Program Director (recently promoted to Captain), with helping her grow in her job. In her current job as a Case Manager, Tondin supervises the pre-trial release of 40 inmates, who are in-home custody, on probation before sentencing. She also helps develop the Department’s programming, connecting inmates to necessary services, as she did for Camper. She has discovered that programs and services for female inmates are particularly hard to find.

“She is a valuable asset to both Talbot County and Easton as a committed employee to the Department of Corrections’ mission. She just does a fantastic job for us and is a great employee. This is one of our first inmates to complete a diploma in several years,” states Terry Kokolis, Director of the Talbot County Department of Corrections.

Kokolis points out that Tondin’s other contributions to the Department have included coordinating the Inmate Law Library, ensuring equal access is provided to all; coordinating inmate programs, including Conflict Management which is a key program delivered to inmates (including Camper); and coordinating mediation sessions for inmates and family members that restores family support and leads to more successful re-entry after discharge.

“The Department of Corrections is legally obligated to provide schooling for inmates like Ty’Mereah. I asked her about continuing her education and finishing working toward her high school diploma and she agreed she wanted to do it,” Tondin explains.

Camper, who was born in Talbot County, was incarcerated during her senior year of high school at Cambridge South Dorchester High School.

“I had been distracted in high school. People here at Department of Corrections helped push me, motivate me, and keep me focused,” Camper shares.

“When I first got here, it was a little scary. I was the youngest person here. I knew I had to do something to occupy myself so that I wasn’t afraid. These programs gave me a different

perspective about life. I have been doing a lot of reading. I read my Bible and have been doing Bible studies while I have been here. I keep a prayer journal and have seen that God is answering my prayers.”

“Our goal here is to set her up with the best tools – to help her succeed so that she can be what she wants to be. She has matured here, taking other Department programs like conflict management while she has been here. She is also setting goals for her life. She will be a better version of herself when she leaves us,” Tondin adds.

Camper is considering furthering her education after she gets out and possibly pursuing a degree in business and a career in cosmetology. No one in her immediate family has done that.

“I made a mistake and have realized I need different people around me and not to take my freedom for granted. I have a supportive family and people who care for me. I have realized that this doesn’t have to be the end of my life and that this is just temporary,” Camper reflects.

Camper’s family was excited about her decision to get her diploma and gave her virtual graduation party in the Talbot County Department of Corrections. She even got to wear a cap and gown and had her principal on a Zoom call for the ceremony.

Camper adds, “I can’t wait to make my mom proud. It has made me realize I am capable of doing things if I keep my eye on things and keep pushing. I would tell people not to think they are not capable of doing something they want to do. There is always a way out if you make a way out.”

Looking to the future, she states, “The storm is going to run out of rain. I want people to know that you can get through a storm if you stay positive and occupy yourself with people who make you happy and who care for you.”

Tondin remarks that the COVID pandemic has played a part in the mental health of inmates. Throughout the pandemic, the Department implemented classes, church services, and visits with families on Zoom to keep days as normal as they could for inmates. In October, the Department will be starting its GED program for inmates again with Chesapeake College. Tondin

is also working with Mid Shore Mediation to develop other classes for inmates, like “Dialogue Circles,” which will provide a new perspective on communications.

Tondin often gets questions about why at the young age of 24 she would want to have this job.

“I am trying to turn around the stigma about inmates. They are people just like you and me. They made mistakes, but they are still people at the end of the day. They have families, goals, and dreams like the rest of us. I treat them like I want to be treated – with respect,” she concludes.

“I am helping society through the back door. We have a duty as a society and need the community to help us in developing the services we can offer. Our goal is to get individuals set up with the most services that we can so that when they are released, they can be successful. It is important to come back to the community where I grew up and make a difference.”

For persons interested in careers with the Talbot County Department of Corrections, visit [www.talbotcountymd.gov](http://www.talbotcountymd.gov).

**Captions:**



**#1: Pictured is Talbot County Department of Corrections inmate Ty'Mereah Camper of Cambridge, who recently completed her high school diploma while incarcerated.**



**#2: Pictured left to right are Amanda Tondin, Case Manager, Talbot County Department of Corrections, who was instrumental in Camper getting her high school diploma.**