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New Wardens Installed at Moose Lake and Rush City Correctional Facilities

St. Paul, Minn. – Today, two new wardens were honored at installation ceremonies at Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Moose Lake and MCF-Rush City.

Brian Collins is the new warden at MCF-Moose Lake and Jesse Pugh is the new warden at MCF-Rush City. Both began their duties earlier this spring.

The stakes for ensuring public safety for all Minnesotans are high, particularly with the increase in crime over the past two years. Community safety is only possible when our communities, the state, and each of us work together to offer opportunity, hold people accountable and deliver justice, and meet the needs of all Minnesotans. A comprehensive response to crime is critical because, over 95% of those who are in our prisons are going to return home to our communities. Our safety depends on their successful reintegration into our society.

If we as a state are to address the repeat offending and the increase in violent crime, we must commit ourselves to the principle that our work doesn’t end by simply arresting someone and sending them to prison. The purpose of prisons cannot be only to punish. It must be to rehabilitate individuals who will come back to their communities, so there are fewer victims in the future. To truly hold people accountable and transform lives, we cannot simply be concerned with how much time people spend in prison – we need to be concerned with how people spend that time.

“Correctional facilities are aptly named—they exist to facilitate transformational change within the people we serve. Because 95% of incarcerated people eventually release from prison, we have an obligation to ensure people return to the community as productive, contributing members,” said MCF-Moose Lake Warden Brian Collins. “Recognizing the community’s role in good correctional outcomes, I intend to engage local and regional criminal justice partners, service providers, business leaders, and members of the public to strengthen reentry efforts. The staff at Moose Lake work hard to achieve this vision every day. They demonstrate incredible resilience and professionalism, especially over the past few years. I am thankful for them and honored to join the team.”

“Positive transformational change and growth is at the core of all of our work within a correctional facility,” said MCF-Rush City Warden Jesse Pugh. “Safer communities are achieved through personal transformation, not by simply locking people up and hoping they change their ways. Given that 95% of incarcerated people transition back to our communities, it is vital that they have access to programming and treatment that best positions them for transformation and success. I’m proud of the person-centered work of our staff and their dedicated service to all Minnesotans.”
The Minnesota Department of Corrections (Minnesota DOC) is committed to working with our partners and investing in what works to keep Minnesotans safe. Wardens play a key role in ensuring incarcerated individuals have access to vital transformational programming such as education, career training, and treatment. The goal is to create a pathway for success both while incarcerated and when returning to the community. Educational achievement and job training are some of the biggest contributors to reduction of future crime.

“Improving the safety of our communities isn’t simply about how much time someone spends in prison after being convicted of a crime,” Minnesota DOC Commissioner Paul Schnell said. “Community safety depends on how people spend the time they serve in prison – the programs they participate in and the intervention services they receive. The wardens overseeing the state’s correctional facilities play pivotal roles in leading their teams to implement the agency’s transformation-focused approach to reduce the risk of reoffending to make Minnesota safer.”

Collins began his state career in 2006 with the Department of Human Services as a security counselor and special investigator. He transferred to the Minnesota DOC in 2009 and worked as a probation and parole agent, program director for the community notification unit, Field Services District Supervisor, Associate Warden of Administration at MCF-St. Cloud, Associate Warden of Operations of the Challenge Incarceration Program and at MCF-Rush City, and recently served as an Assistant Commissioner. Collins holds a master’s degree in management, and both a bachelor’s degree and associate’s degree in criminal justice. He is a combat veteran of the United States Marine Corps having served honorably as a UH-1N “Huey” door gunner in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Pugh began his Minnesota DOC career as a corrections officer at MCF-Stillwater in 2004. He then worked as a case manager in the HOF unit and at St. Cloud. In 2013, he promoted to program director at MCF-St. Cloud. In 2015, he transferred to MCF-Lino Lakes as a program director and also completed a temporary assignment as the associate warden of operations. In 2017, he was promoted to associate warden of administration at MCF-St. Cloud. He was then promoted to associate warden of operations at MCF-Rush City in 2018 and has worked there since, most recently as acting warden since last August before becoming warden in February of this year. Pugh is a graduate of Southwest Minnesota State University with a degree in Justice Administration and Sociology.