



FAMILY MATTERS

A Newsletter For Family Members of DJJ's Clientele

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Fall, 2021

New Offerings Usher In School Year

Instruction has begun at DJJ's Yvonne B. Miller High School with a new extended year/balanced calendar, along with restructured "content-based" teaching teams. This will help improve student outcomes by strengthening instructional practices and addressing learning gaps during intermittent breaks called "intercessions." As family members of our residents, your support and encouragement of them while they are in school is a critical element of their success.

October intercession courses will be a combination of intervention classes to strengthen writing, reading and math skills while promoting progress toward completing assignments and enrichment classes designed to provide students the opportunity to explore their personal interests.

YBM High School also has expanded its partnership with local colleges and universities to offer high school graduates opportunities to earn college credits. This year there are two new college programs: Advanced Media Production Technology Program through Virginia Commonwealth University, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship Program where students will earn a Career Studies Certificate through J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.



Art Instructor Suzanne Lloyd assists a student during the "One School, One Book" reading and art project.

Residents Have Many More Options At JS Reynolds CC

Several additional courses have been added to the post-secondary offerings for residents at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College:

- College Success Skills (1 credit)*
- Introduction to Business (3 credits)*
- Principles of Supervision (3 credits)
- Entrepreneurship (3 credits)*
- Small Business Management (3 credits)*
- Human Resource Management (3 credits)
- Introduction to Marketing (3 credits)

(See "Courses," page 2)



A resident operates a forklift simulator at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College.



Courses *(Continued from page 1)*

- Sales and Marketing Management (3 credits)*
- Customer Service Management (3 credits)*

Students who complete the courses marked with an asterisk receive an Entrepreneurship in Small Business Career Studies Certificate.

Students also can still take Welding and Heavy Equipment Operating, in which they can learn how to use a forklift. Following classes on a simulator, students go to a parking lot at JSRCC where they get to try their hand on a real forklift.



Residential

Larry Jackson Resident Specialist II Bon Air JCC

“Working with youth is my calling,” says RS-1 Larry Jackson, who will mark his 10th year with DJJ this coming May. “When I see the bright light go on in their head, that to me is a paycheck right there.” Mr. Jackson

always makes himself available to any youth who wants to get something off his chest. “Everyone needs someone to talk to,” he says. “Even after they are released, I require them to check in with me every week to let me know how they’re doing. We keep that up until they’ve matured enough not to need it any more.”

Education

Christina Neiswander, Assistant Principal Yvonne B. Miller HS

Ms. Neiswander began her tenure with DJJ in 2016 at Beaumont JCC following many years as an educator and administrator in public, private, and alternative schools in Virginia. Having taught GED in DOC early in her career, Ms. Neiswander was invigorated by

the opportunity to work with the youth at DJJ. At Beaumont, she assisted in coordinating the post-secondary educational programming. In 2018, she transitioned to the high school to serve as the assistant principal. “It has been my privilege to support the students, families, and staff of Yvonne B. Miller High School and post-secondary programs,” she says. “It is an honor to collaborate with educational and facility teams who are steadfast in their commitment to develop successful youth and strong families through personalized services and programming.”

BSU



**Lorrie Beckwith,
Therapist, Bon Air JCC**

Lorrie is a Behavioral Services Unit (BSU) therapist at Bon Air JCC. She has worked for DJJ, and at Bon Air, for 16 years, having started as a counselor, but always with the goal of being a therapist. She had a desire to work with teens who had been through some issues in their lives, or were in an underserved population, and felt that DJJ might offer that opportunity.

Ms. Beckwith feels that she made the right career move. She has challenging, intensive work that affords her the chance to see results. She considers it extremely rewarding to see the youth change, grow and begin to understand and accept their past behaviors, and prepare for their futures. “I do it for the change I see,” she says.

Community



**Shermaine Wright,
Probation Officer,
CSU 2A-Accomac**

Shermaine began her DJJ career working with the Virginia Juvenile Community Crime Control Act, and with youth on electronic monitoring and house arrest. She became a probation officer in 2014. She felt it was a good opportunity to work with the youth, and found it interesting and rewarding. Ms. Wright believes they can change, grow and become productive citizens. That this is only a bump in the road that can be overcome. She likes to communicate with families, but feels it is “all about the kids.”

“My favorite part of the job is being in the field with the kids, because they understand what I am trying to do for them, and they put their effort into working to change and improve,” she says.

Reentry Advocates

The Reentry Advocates serve each region to help prepare committed youth for a seamless transition back into the community. Reentry Advocates help with the reentry process by connecting youth to employment services, providing support and assistance in post-secondary and vocational service, linking youth as well as their families to community agencies for services and ensuring youth have identification documents. Their contact information is listed below.



Eastern Region
Kecia Brothers-Hayes
kecia.brothers
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(804) 972-4148



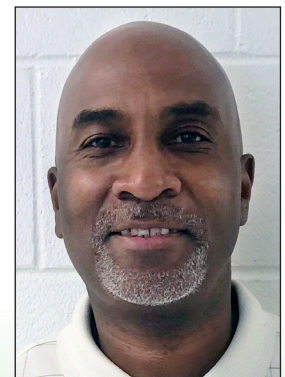
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Northern Region
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Meet Our Family Advocates



Tamla Brookins

I would like to connect with families as a support and advocate for them and their children. Having personal experience with my child in DJJ has given me insight into what others are going through, and I would like

to help. You are your child's greatest cheerleader, and I encourage you to get involved in their treatment. I am available to support and listen.

Contact: (804) 916-0146 or tamla.brookins@djj.virginia.gov



Sonnja Brown

Sonnja relies on her experience as a parent/grandparent of children with emotional and severe challenging behaviors. Her grandson spent four years at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center, experience that led her to advocate for multi-system collaboration and legislative changes. Sonnja is on the

board of directors for NAMI Virginia and is the family voice for CYPM team in Alexandria. "As a Family Advocate, I will help families express their voice, identify their strengths, and understand how different systems work," Sonnja says.

Contact: (703) 380-2061 or sonbro154@aol.com



Diane Leiter, Family Engagement Coordinator

My goal is to get more families involved in our work with the youth, from their entry into our system to their return home. Families are integral to the juvenile's success, and our DJJ staff welcome their support, help and

encouragement of the youth. I share information, respond to questions and requests and try to maintain open communication.

Contact: (804) 314-5242 or diane.leiter@djj.virginia.gov

You Can Be A Family Advocate!

DJJ is recruiting for Family Advocates to serve in the eastern, northern and southern regions of the state. These paid positions are

part-time, approximately 20 hours a month. If you are interested please contact Diane Leiter at (804) 314-5242, or diane.leiter@djj.virginia.gov.

Family Quote

"My child's PO is Aaron Vincion [CSU 9-Williamsburg], who has been just amazing, staying in touch and keeping me informed. Really appreciate her."



Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice
Family Engagement Committee
Reentry Unit
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