



Rising Gas Prices: A Burden for DJJ Employees

It may seem hard to believe that just five years ago, the average price of gasoline in South Carolina was just \$1.23 a gallon. With average gas prices at \$3.78 today (and still rising), many South Carolinians are being hit hard and having to make some tough choices.

Recently, the Office of Public Affairs asked DJJ employees to share how they're coping with rising gasoline prices, and to offer some suggestions to their fellow employees. We received an overwhelming response to this request, and so we wanted to share some of these stories and insights with you. The input we received was sometimes blunt, sometimes hopeful, and sometimes just surprising.

Most of the employees writing in acknowledged that gas prices left them with little left after every paycheck and this was causing them to travel less, even for errands and casual driving.

"Living 10 miles from town and having children active in school, sports and church activities, I stay in town and read the paper or visit with other parents until our children are done," wrote

a county office worker. "Just last night I stayed in town until 9:45 pm while my daughter was at softball practice."

Of course, some of the hardest hit among our employees were those who commute to work over long distances. One Coastal Evaluation Center employee estimates that he spends \$14 a day just traveling to work now. Some of these commuters are even considering moving closer to work. "I went from spending \$250 a month to \$500 a month in gas...I am currently trying to seek housing in the Columbia area so that the gas will not be a huge problem in my future," wrote one Detention Center employee.

Many employees expressed an

interest in more fuel efficient cars. "Even though I still owe money on my van, I have been hitting up the car dealer websites, looking for something I could afford with a smaller engine and gas tank, that gets better mileage for the buck," one county administrative assistant acknowledged. Some have gotten even more creative. One DJJ Communities in Schools employee wrote, "I have been contemplating converting a regular car to a 'plug in electric.' I have chosen the model, the motor, the battery type, and the needed configurations and wiring. It would work for me as a daily commuter vehicle since I drive less than fifty miles a day."

We also got a significant response from employees suggesting that the state go to an extended 4-day work week, and even some suggesting that gas



costs may ultimately force them to leave their job altogether to work closer to home. "I have to drive 45 minutes from home each and everyday; and this is going to become a serious problem if the gas prices don't come down really soon," wrote one frustrated county office worker. "If things don't get better soon I may have to seek employment elsewhere and I love my job." Another worker put a humorous spin on a bad situation by writing "I might just have to quit work and collect disability...yea that's right disability... my gas requirements have caused my wallet to be disabled and will not function properly."

There were some positive stories to come out of the responses as well. Several employees reported getting more exercise as they walked or biked more and some reported that they were able to save money by carpooling to work. "Another teacher and I have started to car pool about three times a week," wrote one Coastal Evaluation Center teacher.

At least one worker looked took a back-to-basics approach to the problem, noting, "If it keeps up, we will be back to horse and buggy, oil lamps and

THE LINK

A NEWSLETTER
FOR DJJ
EMPLOYEES

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FROM THE
DJJ OFFICE
OF
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

fireplaces, and drawing water from a well.”

For some useful information on gas prices in the state (and perhaps some help finding bargains) a good source of information can be found at:

www.southcarolinagasprices.com



Ave Bryant, left, Correctional Officer of the Year

May is Correctional Officers' Month and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) held a special luncheon program May 8 to recognize the work of its security staff. During the luncheon, Juvenile Correctional Officer II Ave Bryant was named 2007 Juvenile Correctional Officer of the Year. Officer Bryant, who joined the agency in 2006, works in DJJ's Willow Lane Operations Center and is a security camera operator. She was chosen by her peers for the award. Congratulations!

DJJ Director Bill Byars and Mrs. Byars Honored as Child Advocates

DJJ is proud to announce that its Director Bill Byars and his wife Camille were presented the first "Kappy Hubbard Voices for Children Award" at the recent Picasso Project Gala and Auction held at the Columbia Conference Center.

Sponsored by the Voices for South Carolina's Children, Prevent Child Abuse South Carolina, and the Children's Trust Fund of South Carolina, the award honored the Byars for their "outstanding dedication to children and for making the well-being of children a major part of their life's work."

The Kappy Hubbard Award is named for Katharine "Kappy" Hubbard, a long-time children's advocate in South Carolina and an Order of the Palmetto recipient.

DJJ Director Receives National Child Advocacy Award

Congratulations to Judge Byars, who was awarded the national A. L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice during its annual

conference in Washington, DC in April.

The Carlisle Award is given annually to recognize a Coalition member who has made outstanding contributions to youth, to the Coalition itself, the juvenile court system, and the broader arena of juvenile justice. Director Byars is only the third person from South Carolina to receive the award, and has had long-standing involvement with the Coalition in his advocacy work on behalf of South Carolina's children.



DJJ Dedicates Trees to Victims of Crime

DJJ held an observance ceremony dedicated to the victims of crime on Tuesday, April 15, 2008 at 12 p.m. The observance was held at the BRRC Victims' Garden, with DJJ dedicating 13 recently planted trees, symbolizing 13 categories of crime. The trees are meant to serve as a symbol of respect to victims of crime in South Carolina. DJJ employee Victor Oyinbo shared his heart-wrenching story as a crime victim survivor who was shot in the face and left to die on a Columbia street; only he survived his horrendous attack. The keynote speaker was the Honorable Reginald Lloyd, director, South Carolina State Law Enforcement Division. The garden is maintained by juveniles who are incarcerated at DJJ.

W.W. Long Youth Development Center Receives Grant

The W.W. Long Youth Development Center (YDC) in Aiken has received a \$3,000 grant from the South Carolina Arts Commission to incorporate arts into its educational curriculum. The YDC, the result of a joint partnership between DJJ and Clemson University, is designed as an alternative juvenile justice program for nonviolent, low-risk offenders ages 12 to 18. While at the residential, camp-like setting, juvenile offenders from across the state learn behavior modification and continue their education with unique, hands-on curriculum modules that



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align with South Carolina educational standards.

The SC Arts Commission grant will enable the YDC to utilize an art educator and consultant to incorporate performing and visual arts into existing curriculum modules such as aerospace, zoology, electricity, marine science, horticulture, food and nutrition, and mechanical science. A portion of the grant funds will be used to purchase art supplies.

“Family Solutions” Program Recognized by OJJDP as “Promising” Model Program

“Family Solutions” a 10-week program used by DJJ at the community level has been recognized nationally as a “promising” model program by the U.S. Justice Department’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in its latest *Model Programs Guide*. DJJ currently contracts with Families4Change, a non-profit, for use of the program in 10 South Carolina counties. The program was developed for use in Georgia’s juvenile justice system and is now used in seven states nationwide.

Multiple families in group sessions are able to confront, support, and witness others’ successes and failures. The group generally has eight or more families participating and at least one professionally trained leader assisted by group facilitators who help the group leader manage group interaction and provide a vigilance that prevents opportunities for exclusive peer interaction. The OJJDP *Model Programs Guide* (MPG) is designed to assist practitioners and communities in implementing evidence-based prevention and intervention programs that can make a difference in the lives of children and communities.

Employee Involvement Fuels Employee Interest

The diversity of activities during DJJ’s Spring for Wellness is a defining characteristic of the value of our Wellness and Training Center and one that should not be undervalued. Each activity held on April 10 at the Wellness and Training Center served as small steps toward healthier lifestyles and as a key component to shaping wellness.

The day began with early morning health screenings (82 employees screened), a mid-day seminar (with our own Marcie Calvert as guest speaker,) the 5-mile “Yes, We Can Walk” (26 walkers completing the 5-miles) to late afternoon volleyball games, (eight teams competed), to health-related vendors. We enjoyed a full day of activities that engaged employees from all sectors of the agency. The activities attracted employees from outside the

Columbia area, which was a plus for the day.

Congratulations to the Willow Lane Champs who won the volleyball tournament after playing a total of four games. The Willow Lane Champs are Leigh Hicks (captain,) Jamie Rice, Yakesha Means, Tessa Ashwell, April Hatten, Tonisha Reese, Tacita Bas, Melody McCrae, Theresa Bryant, and Corinth Stack

While the Office of Public Affairs has oversight for Spring Fling for Wellness, the success of the day was driven by teamwork. Special thanks to Sandra Davidson, employee health nurse; Major Priscilla Pee, Rehabilitative Services Internal Training; Jack Cameron, Wellness Center manager, and Brigitte Scoville and Stacey Atkinson of the Wellness Center Advisory Board. Also, special thanks to our Office of Dietary Services for the refreshments.

More Wellness and Training Center News

Staff response to the “Give the Gift of Life” blood drive was overwhelmingly generous. Our goal was to surpass our last donation of 24 units. Because of your giving-spirit, the American Red Cross collected 50 units of blood on May 22 during our blood drive held at the Wellness and Training Center and coordinated by Anitra Griffin, the Office of Public Affairs assistant.



Front Gate Security Staff Recognized

DJJ’s front gate security staff was recently recognized by Director Bill Byars, Chief of Staff Margaret Barber and the Executive Management Team for their outstanding work. Pictured front row, left to right are Willie Muhammad, Jerry Adger, deputy for Rehabilitative Services, Angenette Davis, Cpl. Ruth Spradlin, and Cpl. Herman Eddy. Back row, left to right: Cpl. William Czarnitzki, Benny Mellon, Cpl. Sheila Dortch, Sgt. Peggy Williams, Cpl. JoAnne Johnson, Roshanna Holmes, and Bill Byars.



Sarratt Receives Certificate

Vanetta D. Sarratt, CSIV-Probation in York County, received The Graduate Certificate of Youth Development Leadership from Clemson University on April 18. The Youth Development Leadership program is a two year graduate program with two different focuses of attaining a certificate in Youth Development Leadership or a Master of Science degree. Ms. Sarratt will complete her graduate studies beyond the certificate level to earn a Master of Science degree in Youth Development Leadership in December.



Charleston County Office Showing Signs of Volunteerism

The Charleston County DJJ office recently received a new sign to display in their reception area. But the office is really showing signs of community volunteerism. The staff recently joined with 10 juveniles and participated in a local bridge run, helping to organize and administer the event. They also have plans to participate in upcoming events such as the "Second Annual Green Village Tour 8K Run/Walk," "Convoy of Hope," and "Dining with Friends." They also will be sponsoring the third annual "Tri-County Basketball Tournament" in August. All proceeds from their summer fundraisers will go toward the Low Country AIDS Foundation.

Jennifer Clarke appointed new Laurens County Director

Jennifer Clarke has been appointed the new county office director for Laurens County. She has been with the agency 10 years, beginning her career as a Community Specialist in Probation in the Greenville County office. She rose through the ranks and was promoted to CSIV Supervisor over Probation, and served there for 2 years. She currently serves on the SCDJJ Leadership Council, and the Community Service Division Advisory Council.

Inside DJJ's Legal Team: Do you know who?

Hometown: Born in Charleston & grew up in Ocala, FL

Occupation: Attorney

Worst Nightmare: That I was a contestant on Survivor . . . sleeping on the ground, being covered in creepy-crawley bugs, having very little food or water, not showering for weeks, being surrounded by hateful people . . . yikes! Not even a million dollars could make me want to endure that nightmare for real.

First date: Fifth grade – went to my boyfriend Jeremiah's house – played Atari, ate chocolate chip cookie dough, and prank called our friends (romantic, huh?) . . . my first "real" date (and it's not a real date until the guy is driving the car instead of your parents) was in 10th grade, and we went to dinner and a movie.

Most hated vegetable: Carrots - yuck!

Best thing about my job: Without a doubt, the people I work with. So many people wake up in the morning and dread going to work. I am blessed to be doing a job I love – that every day is different and that I get to work with people who are truly dedicated to improving the lives of young people and their families.

Person who influenced me most: My parents – they always pushed my sister and me to succeed and taught us the importance of giving back to others.

Last book read: "A Total Waste of Makeup" by Kim Gruenfelder (chick lit at it's best - laugh out loud funny!)

I am a push over for: My dog, Maggie – there is nothing better than walking in the door every night and having someone be sooooo glad to see you

An educated person is one who: never stops learning. There was a man in my law school class who was close to 70 years old – I love that!

Something that gives me chills: Watching the young ladies I work with in Young Ambassadors find their voice and learn to be proud of their accomplishments.

My hobby is: Scrap-booking – I think there is real value in celebrating the everyday moments of life and preserving them for generations to come.

Something I do well: Multi-tasking

A subject I would like to learn more about: Photography

The color I look best in: Royal blue

My most embarrassing moment: Too embarrassing to share!

A goal I would like to achieve: Paying off my student loan (I feel like I'll be making payments until the day I die!)

I have a sweet tooth for: Ice cream (mint chocolate chip is my fave)

Something I don't do well: Gardening . . . I can't keep plants alive more than a few weeks. I either water them too much or too little – I just have no idea what I'm doing!

In my next life: I would like to travel more – see the world.

