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Newsletter: Issue 16

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Employees, Volunteers, Community Partners, and Friends

NEWSLETTER



Team DJJ Hitting High Notes



Team DJJ is stepping up and through to the Fall with many successes this Summer and lining up even more for the upcoming year. Our Juveniles are earning High School diplomas, GEDs, certificates and National awards at a dizzying pace.

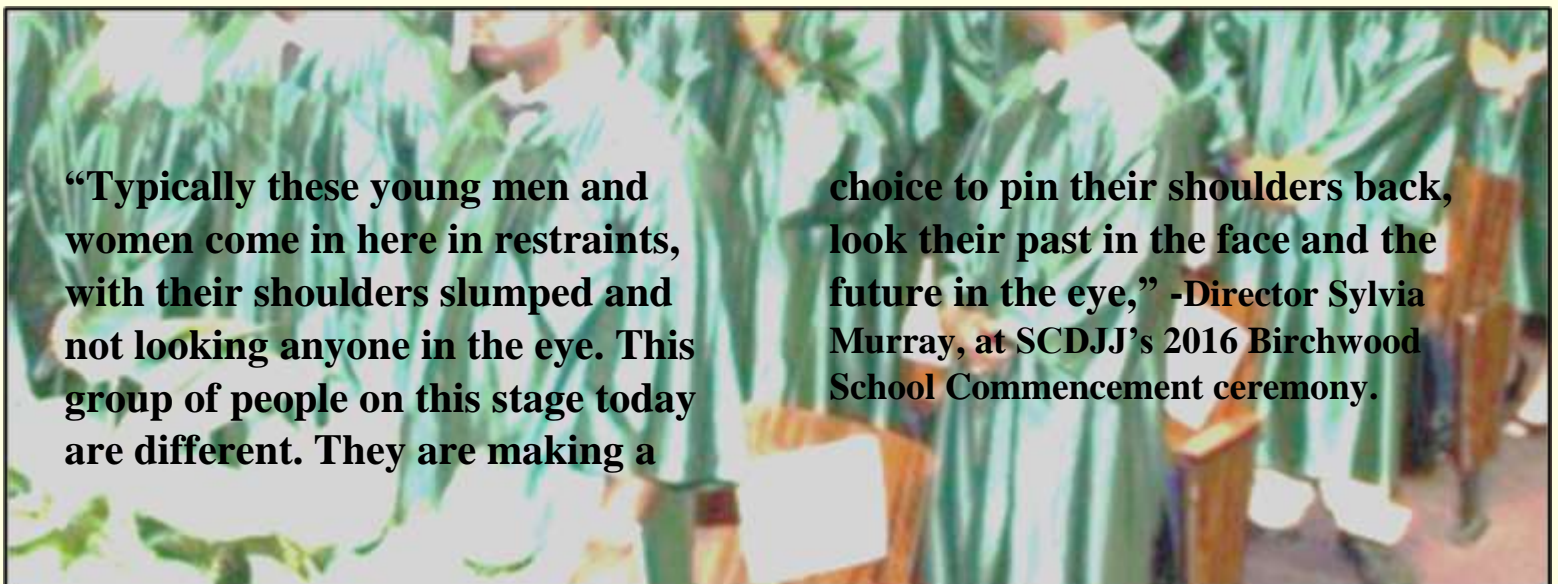
College choices are being realized, testing for military careers and job placements are all happening at an almost frantic pace across South

Carolina. Nearly 1,500 South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice employees are working hard every day to ensure change is possible, hope, potential, security and rehabilitation are realized.

Please share the amazing stories of our employees and juveniles to someone you know and across the state of South Carolina. –Director Sylvia Murray.

“Typically these young men and women come in here in restraints, with their shoulders slumped and not looking anyone in the eye. This group of people on this stage today are different. They are making a

choice to pin their shoulders back, look their past in the face and the future in the eye,” -Director Sylvia Murray, at SCDJJ’s 2016 Birchwood School Commencement ceremony.



Class of 2016

Each GED, Diploma or certificate EARNED for a juvenile at DJJ is more than just a piece of paper or an item checked on a job application. It is validation and proof the juveniles at DJJ are making a change in themselves and maybe one day in our communities.

Many of our juveniles come here with challenges and issues educationally. Being in a correctional setting and learning behind razor wire does not make it easier.

Our teachers, counselor's, security, support staff and media services all work together for the much longer school year of 235 days than the average South Carolina School to ensure a successful student.

Each day is spent diligently working to make our juveniles better students. Hard work does make a difference. Teaching in a restrictive environment did not deter the amazing drive and efforts at DJJ.

400! What is 400 and what does it mean? That overwhelming number is the percentage our math and reading scores for the students went up this year. 400%!

“Our vision and values here at DJJ is to drive these Juveniles hard in the positive direction and future they deserve. We always push them to a better self,” explained DJJ Director Sylvia Murray.

Dr. Jamie Quinn, his leadership team, Principal Floyd Lyles, Mr. Timothy Munch, teachers, support staff and other agency partners who work together to educate DJJ youth are amazing and to be held up as an example to any other school district in South Carolina.

We are succeeding in changing lives. The SC DJJ School district has the same goal as any other: Give the students a chance at education, so they can give themselves a chance to succeed in life. Inside our classrooms-inside our fence, the choices students make for success or otherwise can determine the paths they walk one day on the other side.



Midland's Evaluation Center Hosts NFL Veteran Mentor

A two-time Super Bowl Champion came to the Midlands Evaluation Center in July to deliver a fiery hour-long mentoring session to a packed DJJ gymnasium. Willie Brown, a 13-year NFL veteran with the Pittsburgh Steelers and Seattle Seahawks, talked about discipline, staying away from bad crowds and maintaining respect for family and community. <http://wspa.com/2016/07/22/local-nfl-veteran-motivates-djj-teens/>



JUVENILES AT MEC LISTEN AS WILLIE BROWN MENTORS DURING THE HOUR-LONG SESSION

-Photo by DJJ Public Affairs

Belk, Lipski, Patterson and Alston help Save Holly Dormitory

Heroism arrives at anytime and anywhere. When it is least expected, a potential tragedy can strike and possibly only you can be the difference in saving lives and property. Below is an example of heroism, cooperation as well as swift action here at DJJ by our employees.

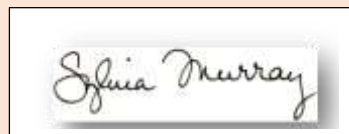
A note of appreciation from Director Murray to several of our outstanding members of Team DJJ.

Sergeant Shanet Belk, Sergeant Mary Lipski, Juvenile Specialist Anthony Patterson and Sergeant James Alston are cited for extraordinary actions, teamwork and bravery on the evening of July 22nd, 2016. The DJJ personnel performed an emergency evacuation of a juvenile living unit while battling fire and smoke. Fast action and instincts were the difference between putting out a quickly out of control fire or the loss of life and destruction of a dormitory.

Sergeant Patterson was the first to alert his fellow officers at the Holly Dormitory. The early alert allowed vital time for Belk and Lipski to release all the juveniles from their spaces and provide for the safe evacuation of the juveniles.

The quick-thinking DJJ personnel were able to properly account for all juveniles and a safe environment provided for the residents. Alston grabbing two fire extinguishers fought hostile conditions to open the door to room B-1. Alston and Belk, with unselfish abandon, dispersed the extinguishers putting out the fire, but also suffered from smoke inhalation during their actions. Local EMS responded to assist the injured officers as the local Fire Department ensured the fire was out.

Belk, Lipski, Patterson and Alston demonstrated remarkable initiative, exceptional fortitude, teamwork and daring action in spite of imminent personal danger throughout this incident. Their unselfish actions, courage, and unwavering devotion to duty reflect the highest credit upon themselves and the South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice.



The Director's Cut

Safety and Security

Two words grouped with both as important. But which comes first? Safety or Security? Here at DJJ it is more complicated and simple.

Rehabilitation, safety, education and security are pillars to our operations and must be balanced to fit the needs of our juveniles, Team DJJ as well as

Community Partners, victims, family and loved ones of the juveniles.

The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice is trusted to protect and provide a chance for rehabilitation and successful placement to a community for the juvenile. I, as Director of DJJ, am ultimately responsible to ensure the balancing act is held together and all of us placed in a position to succeed. But I cannot do it alone. We need all of us to do our part.

I ordered a security audit this Spring after incidents occurred leading me to believe we needed to take a deeper look into how safety and security is balanced in our DJJ missions. All areas at BRRC were examined and recommendations put forward. The Executive Management Team is analyzing the audit and implementing many changes at BRRC and may implement at other facilities as well. Perhaps you have already seen some:

- Each and every vehicle coming and going to BRRC are searched for contraband and other items.
- Various members of our first-responder DJJ Police force are qualified and authorized to use pepper spray as appropriate to maintain safety and order.
- Multi-tiered and specialized housing ranging from highly secure environments for the most aggressive youth to an honor dorm for the most well-behaved youth.
- Improved fencing, lighting and security cameras.

Some changes may not be popular and is a change to your day-to-day routine. Let me assure you all changes are carefully discussed with all factors weighed and balanced.

We had the privilege to have Governor Nikki Haley visit us and hear directly from you, Team DJJ, on issues

matter to us all including our juveniles. Your voice was heard and is valued.

Ultimately the deciding factor on all safety and security considerations is “What is the right thing to do give our staff and juveniles the best opportunity to succeed?”

Do car searches of cars at the gate including employees mean we do not trust our staff around each other and the juveniles? We trust and value our employees. But working at DJJ has special considerations with employment.

As someone whose car has been spot-selected for expanded search and the K-9 dogs checking my car multiple times, I accept it as part of my responsibility to have the privilege to work alongside esteemed colleagues and continue to make a difference providing hope to our juveniles. I feel it does provide further peace of mind for employees, juveniles and their loved ones to know we are working to ensure a safe and secure environment.

The searches greatly reduce the contraband within the juvenile environment. This leads to the discussion of ensuring we all remain diligent in our duties.

Every small detail matters. No corners cut or complacency is to be tolerated. Each fraction given away can directly result in a terrible gap of the safety and security to our staff and juveniles.

Even well-intentioned actions or seemingly benign actions can be tragic. From juveniles “cheeking” medicines to staff cooking in unauthorized work spaces. We must keep the sharpest of eyes focused on our and juvenile safety. The layers of policies, procedures and best practices are enacted to ensure the balance of safety and security.

Juveniles are confronting and defeating addictions, making victim resolutions, placed directly into jobs, earning GED's, certificates, diplomas, college credits and even trading our secured campus for a college campus. It is all because of you and our great work. The nearly 1,500 statewide employees are equally important to our long-term success. I implore all of us to look after each other, continue to perform our duties in an exemplary manner and ensure our juveniles succeed!

Thank you.

-Sylvia Murray, Director, SCDJJ



JROTC at 9/11 CEREMONY. PHOTO BY TRACY GLANTZ AND STORY BY BRISTOW MARCHANT AT THE STATE.

DJJ in the News

What does 9/11 mean to those who are too young to remember?

That was one motivation for Rose King to share her personal story with the young people she oversees and mentors at the Broad River Road complex of the S.C. Department of Juvenile Justice.

King, a 53-year-old correctional officer, spoke about her firsthand experience in lower Manhattan on Sept. 11, 2001, at a memorial service held Friday at the campus's Birchwood High School. She retold the terror she felt that day to young inmates for whom 9/11 is something in a history book.

"It's therapeutic," King says of recalling indelible memories 15 years later. "The scars don't go away easily."

King, was a 38-year-old native New Yorker, taking the train to work from Brooklyn to Manhattan when she got her first news of the terrorist attack from an unusual source.

"A homeless man entered the train shouting, 'We're under attack! We're under attack!'" She told the teenage inmates and guests gathered around the Birchwood flag pole. "And like everyone else in that train car that morning, I ignored him."

Soon every cell phone on the train was ringing with news that a plane had flown into the north tower of the World Trade Center. She admits now to being troubled by her initial reaction to the news: how much it would affect traffic.

The gravity of what had happened only hit King once she walked up the subway steps onto a street full of people staring at the towers.

"I assumed they were looking at what had already happened," she said. "That's when the second plane hit (the south tower)."

She went to her office at the New York health department, where workers found themselves stranded as lower Manhattan became increasingly locked down and cell phone service was shut off. The lobby was converted to a temporary medical clinic.

The most disturbing thing she saw was a woman covered in ash, motioning for one of the nurses to bring her some water. "I thought she was going to drink it, and instead she poured it up her nose, and all this black sludge came out," King said, reading from her text.

The trauma landed King in bed for three days after the attack. Within a year, she decided to leave her birthplace for her family's home state.

King's story gave the young people at DJJ the closest they will get to a first-hand experience of a day that stunned the nation.

"I wasn't old enough to see it firsthand," said 15-year-old Gabriell, who The State newspaper is not identifying by her full name because she's in juvenile detention. "Before it was, not unrealistic, but like it was something that didn't really happen."

Like the other teenagers at Friday's ceremony, Gabriell is a cadet in Birchwood's Junior ROTC program. The color guard raised a flag to half-staff, and then laid a wreath and a piece of the rubble from the towers at the base of the pole.

The teenager already was planning to go into the military, but King's account fortified how she felt about that decision.

"It makes me proud of my American citizenship, and encourages me to fight for the country," Gabriell said.

Joe'l, another cadet who lived in New York for a while when he was younger, remembers hearing older people there talk about that day. But the 17-year-old also came away from Friday's event with a deeper appreciation for what people like King endured.

"It helped me understand how important it was," Joe'l said, "That these people died, and what all the country had to go through."

<http://www.thestate.com/news/politics-government/article100929632.html>

AMI-A New Lease on Life

Story by Carolyn A. Prince of Herald-Advocate

When Adrian Kershaw and Stephen Lyons finish their tour of duty at AMIKids Camp Bennettsville, they will return to their home counties as mature young men with a sense of purpose, plans for their future and marketable skills.

All of this developed over time through the intensive counseling and consistent mentoring each received from the Camp Bennettsville staff.

After accepting responsibility for their past indiscretions and seeking to make better choices for their future during their required residency at Camp Bennettsville, Adrian and Stephen eagerly accepted the opportunity to participate in the carpentry and masonry program.

This vocational skills program was funded by a grant AMIKids received from the U S Department of Labor.

Upon successful completion of the course taught by Craig Barnhart, the young men received certification from the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER). This valuable certification is life-long and worldwide.

Benefits of NCCER Certification include being at the top of any hiring list for carpenters and eligible to receive higher rate of pay. Barnhart describes Adrian and Stephen as focused learners.

Each mastered the mathematical skill needed for carpentry work that often proves to be the most challenging for students.

Although they learned the course work of each step in building- measuring, layout, which tools to use for each application and why, Barnhart said they needed 'hands on' experience to hone their skills and to enhance their resumes.

Adrian described carpentry, as "fun and that having this skill will take me a long way in life". Stephen was quick to add, "I have already made plans how having the certification can help me make money after I leave AMIKids".

Although these young men plan to be carpenters, Mr. Barnhart said other students in the program that do not enjoy the physical side of carpentry and masonry have the options of further studies in engineering, design, or architecture.

Their first 'hands on' projects included building signs, tables, benches, and doghouses. A local citizen saw one of the well-built doghouses and asked if they were for sale.

Barnhart said yes; that the grant had ended and they need to raise money to purchase building materials for the next group of students.

Jim Haynes, Marlboro County Administrator, gave permission for the carpentry students to advertise and sell the doghouses through the Animal Shelter.

Next, Barnhart and the carpentry students were offered the job of demolishing an old greenhouse and building a new storage shed in its place. The owner purchased all building materials and supplies; Adrian and Stephen provided the labor.

This job will be completed by September 2nd and the 'certified' carpenters will need additional work.

For more information about carpentry and masonry projects, contact Craig Barnhart (843-454-0045) at AMIKids Camp Bennettsville.

<http://www.heraldadvocate.com/Newsstory/TabId/69/ArtMI D/1345/ArticleID/413/These-two-AMIKids-gain-'a-new-lease-on-life'.aspx>

DJJ Social Media

Share, post and repost to help us inform! Please follow DJJ on Facebook and Twitter. Send DJJ Public Affairs items you would like posted on behalf of your Division or Unit or as a way to let the public and our partners know some of the great work we do. But always remember personal social media is never truly personal and as State Employees we are held responsible for our postings.

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Editor's Note: We have changed the format to the DJJ Newsletter. It is designed to be more timely, have a wider reach to all of our audiences and include the goals of helping to improve employee morale, employment recruitment and of course family, victim and partner education to DJJ Missions.

Our social media will be used to spotlight many of items previously posted in the newsletter to include graduations, advancement, bonuses, success stories, tours and visitors. This allows DJJ to be timely to internal and external audiences and provide an even more transparent DJJ Informational environment. If you have any questions, comments or concerns, please call the Public Information Director, Patrick Montgomery, at (803) 896-9765 or email at pmont@scdjj.net