



# CSU UNITY

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

October, 2021

## You Are AMAZING Because ...

We are living in a world with a life altering pandemic. The challenges it presents expose the true character of a team. It is important, more than ever, to highlight the resilience of our DJJ family and our respective efforts and accomplishments to maintain unity, happiness, and harmony within the individual units.

The core values of DJJ – Safety, Connection, Purpose, and Fairness – hold more relevance than ever. For this issue of the *CSUnity*, the idea of Connection stands out. Webster defines connection as a relationship in which a person, thing, or idea is linked or associated with something else. A synonym for *connect* is *unite* (i.e. Unity).

So how did we unite, support and

empower one another to grow and be better during this past challenging year? Did we re-evaluate our purpose, look at better ways to maintain our safety and challenge our practices of fairness?

When people are united for a common purpose it can be almost impossible for the goals of those people to be deterred regardless of the obstacles. Martin Luther King Jr. once stated, “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be.”

Read on to see how our CSUs completed the sentence, “This past year, our team was amazing because...” – and how we united in a common goal in ways we never thought possible.



“Thank you for your grit and grace under pressure. You are so valuable and important to DJJ’s mission. You are AMAZING because you are you!”

*Linda McWilliams  
Deputy Director  
Community Programs*



Back row, from left: Tanya Houston, clerical supervisor; Laura Reece, fiscal coordinator; Deborah Price. Front row, from left: office service specialists Juliana Sebra, Kovette Cook, Denea Armstrong.

### CSU 1–Chesapeake

We assembled a virtual training program that was sent to everyone weekly, and showed work-related films two days a week in our training room. Our clerical staff

came to work every day and manned the phones, helped with paperwork and helped secure and distribute PPEs. Our POs and IOs embraced virtual visitation and conferencing with clients and families. Our intake team set up appointments for the public and made it easier for them to file paperwork. Everyone worked together as a team and stayed positive!

### CSU 2–Virginia Beach

Above all else, our team demonstrates kindness. We have supported each other through many obstacles: loss and grief, rough days, and taking on additional challenges. With only four intake officers, we created PowerPoint and video trainings to train probation officers in intake and processing

petitions; created new, easier-to-understand petition forms; and researched restorative justice for a CSU partnership with the police department and public schools.

### CSU 2A–Accomac

2A CSU staff have been amazing because of their commitment to helping youth and families even in the midst of a global pandemic. They have demonstrated much compassion, innovation, resilience, and fortitude in the face of the many challenges during these unprecedented times. The teamwork displayed has been extraordinary. Staff have consistently ensured the public receives the best customer service, and they have assisted one another to ensure cases have been covered in court, in the office, and in the field despite the many changes.

## CSU 3–Portsmouth

Merriam-Webster defines teamwork as work done by several associates with each doing a part, but all subordinating personal prominence to the efficiency of the whole. The picture of CSU 3 is right next to the definition! We have worked as a team to provide services to the community, develop new ways of accomplishing our tasks and continue to support and cover for each other when needed. We have been resilient, brave, kind and creative, all while maintaining a sense of humor.

## CSU 4–Norfolk

Our staff is amazing – not just the past year, but all the time. When it's time to deliver services to citizens who are not always experiencing their best days, or we have COVID scares, or if life interrupts routines, CSU 4 staff shows up! We show concern, compassion, and willingness to help others, and we bring our best to the table. Thanks, CSU 4 staff, for always showing up.

## CSU 5–Suffolk

We were fearless and showed up to work without complaint. We understood that the demands of a small, generic unit made it more challenging to telework, even when it was offered. Despite the pandemic limiting the amount of contact our three field offices could have, we stayed connected and enjoyed each other's company on the rare occasions we could get together.

## CSU 6–Hopewell

We have said for years that we are family. We sometimes argue and fuss, but when times are tough, we support each other. Two of our three intake officers, each with more than 40 years of service, retired during the pandemic. Their huge shoes were very difficult to fill, but our staff stepped up and took care of the void. We learned to work smarter and not harder, despite many hard days. We discovered that many of our families appreciate being able to meet virtually instead of having to take off work or find transportation to the office. We conducted home visits by taking chairs and sitting in the yard with our clients, maintaining a safe distance. We are proud of how well all of our staff worked together.

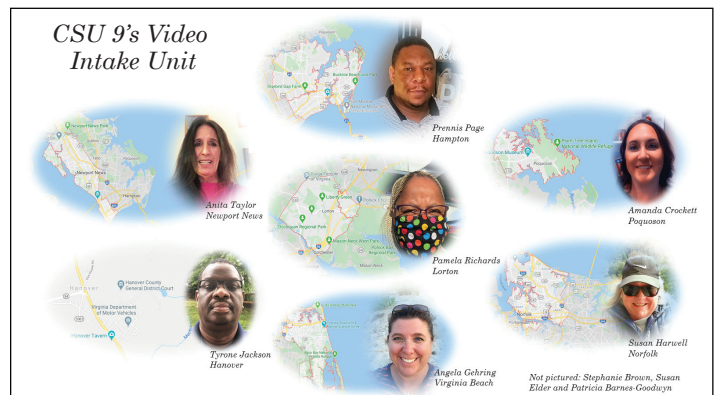
## CSU 7–Newport News

We showed true resiliency in the face of adversity. So much was taken away from us personally as we watched our own family members and children struggle with the disease, the restrictions, or just the change in general. We encountered new schedules, teleworking, technology challenges, and the death of a beloved member of our team. In spite of it all, our staff rallied to continue to look out for the clients and families that we serve and most importantly for each other. We loved harder than most of us have ever loved before.



## CSU 8–Hampton

We have weathered all storms and have kept afloat. The pandemic garnered very new and frightening challenges and at first, none of us knew how this was going to work out...we still don't to a certain degree. But we stuck together for the good of the department and the clients, figuring out how to work every day with our clients, collaborate with service providers and vendors, and keep each other safe while doing what needed to be done.



## CSU 9–Williamsburg

The CSU 9 staff proved themselves winners because of their resilience and ability to overcome the pandemic's unique challenges. Our Video Intake team performed their duties from remote locations across the Commonwealth, yet displayed a high degree of cohesion, especially when additional shift coverage was needed, or helped fill in when someone was absent. Our field offices appreciated each other by reinforcing self-care, recognizing each individual's value, and creating an internal recognition program. We witnessed the growth of individuals and teams during the pandemic, and learned the true meaning of teamwork.

## CSU 10–Halifax

We have navigated successfully through a pandemic, societal divide, and internal staff shortages – not just surviving, but thriving as a team. We provided coverage for eight offices through a rotating telework schedule, completed video intakes, and provided supervision and coaching of youth virtually. Staff also traveled numerous hours between offices with no complaints to assist as needed due to quarantines and vacancies. Our positive outlook, funny stories and laughter got us through many days.



## **CSU 11–Petersburg**

Even with the pandemic, CSU 11's team hopped onto the new CSU 11 train with its new conductor, director Tracy King. We have worked diligently to continue to provide the best possible service to our clients as well as help Director King get acclimated to the unit. We have teamed to cover our five district offices to ensure there was no break in service. We have embraced change and uncertainty and thrived with excellence by using cohesion as the catalyst to continue to do the work we do with greatness.

## **CSU 12–Chesterfield**

Our staff have been absolutely wonderful during the past 18 months by being brave in the face of adversity, and positive in a world of uncertainty. We often had to make monthly, weekly, and sometimes daily changes to how we do business, with the staff asking only, "What do you need me to do?" We have been very willing to roll with the punches, and to create new ideas to help our CSU ensure the safety of staff and clients, and continue as if there had been no pandemic.

## **CSU 13–Richmond**

Our SDM team is amazing because everyone is unique and offers his/her own shared experiences and knowledge to the overall success of the unit. One of the greatest strengths of the unit is its ability to effectively communicate, collaborate and support one another.

Our parole officers are amazing because they have given their best amid frustration and emotional exhaustion, and their ability to recharge their batteries and keep their focus on what matters most.

Our diagnostic unit is amazing in how we found strength in one another, and shared our willingness to be vulnerable, honest, and open. The connections made during this time will be with each person for a lifetime because we went through something major together.

Our intake unit is amazing because they have been there for each other like a team should be and overcame hurdles and misunderstandings.

Our probation unit is amazing because they always go the extra mile and are willing to lend a helping hand to their co-workers. Even with all the challenges they face every day, they persevere.

## **CSU 14–Henrico**

This past year, we learned a new electronic process and techniques to continue the necessary court docket work. The process allowed OSS staff to telework seamlessly. They transitioned with an astounding resilience, keeping the CSU flowing and Badge updated. They have set the mark with their trendsetter work ethic. Their process was even shared with another jurisdiction. We are proud of our COVID journey success.

## **CSU 15–Fredericksburg**

Teamwork, patience and focus kept us on the DJJ train during the pandemic! We had to think differently about how to provide intake in our communities. We bought an Ipad to help us conduct virtual intakes. We adapted to this new way of doing things without sacrificing customer service. We also held virtual anger management classes as well as personally supervised community service projects to ensure youth were able to complete community service hours stipulated by the court.



## **CSU 16–Charlottesville**

The amazing CSU 16 team embodied flexibility and resilience every day from being in the office to rotations that changed frequently. If necessary they helped out in other parts of the district, working with different judges and clerks. Our administrative staff made sure we had the supplies necessary to keep everyone safe. They treated the public respectfully but ensured safety protocols were followed. The probation supervisors worked tirelessly to keep everyone connected and ensure high quality services.

## **CSU 17–Arlington**

We once again demonstrated our deep commitment to our mission and our ability to overcome adversity and to adapt. We moved seamlessly to new ways of doing business, and did so without compromising their effectiveness. We supported youth and adults by quickly learning new tools to do much of our work remotely, and to ensure the safety of all. Staff at every unit created new ways of delivering essential services and ensured the safety of clients, petitioners, coworkers and themselves. Our program staff not only continued to provide in-person services throughout the pandemic, but also found creative new ways to work with our clients with the greatest needs. Our supervisors led with courage and dedication to make sure the CSU continued to achieve its mission and that their team was supported.

## CSU 18–Alexandria

We think Alexandria City Manager Mark Jinks said it all during his comments to the Alexandria City Council on Nov. 10, 2020: He stated that no city department had “punched above its weight” more than our CSU, adding that the “Court Service Unit’s enthusiasm and dedication has become a stellar example to what is possible.” Especially noted was CSU 18’s support of Alexandria’s Emergency Operations Center (EOC) during the pandemic. “The CSU is small, but their contribution to the EOC has been mighty. CSU staff have stepped up to fill special assignments that include packing supplies, coordinating drivers, and providing deliveries to residents who have contracted COVID-19.” CSU 18 also supported the rental assistance program and outreach to families about childcare support, recruiting City staff members to take on special assignments, and, most recently, providing administrative support to the City Manager’s office.

## CSU 19–Fairfax

Last May, our Court’s Family Counseling Services developed a series of supports to surround staff who were expected to work their jobs maintaining community safety while managing the stressors of the pandemic on both their personal and professional lives. The program “HOW R U?” was born with the intent of offering peer-to-peer support, knowing how important it is to support one another’s social, emotional and mental health. HOW R U was not meant to replace counseling services where truly needed; it was aimed at being a partnership between colleagues that leads to conversation, support, advice, encouragement and check-ins.

The program had three parts: 1) provide staff with up to an hour of time every week with a family counselor if requested; 2) the formation of a facilitated virtual support group called Getting to the Other Side (GTTOS); and 3) provide a supportive clinical contractor who met virtually with supervisors each week to help with managing staff during these unprecedented times. GTTOS began meeting in March, 2020, with its final meeting earlier this month. It provided a valuable platform where workers could collaborate and discuss a range of topics such as family concerns about health and safety, changes in teleworking from home, effects from social distancing, parenting challenges and more.



*CSU 20–Loudoun Probation Officers Lance Kelley and Darryl Whiten at a recent staff cookout.*

## CSU 20–Loudoun

“We faced an unknown, grew across two more counties, and didn’t miss a beat,” says Director Ira Holland.

## CSU 21–Martinsville

Our team is amazing because of how quickly we can respond to an immediate need we identify in the community. While doing a recent EPICS skill building session, Senior Probation Officer Rachel Kancherla (in photo) of our Henry County office was reviewing a youth’s needs. The youth responded by saying, “Rachel, I am hungry, we don’t have much to eat.” Within two



hours she had utilized community resources and delivered the food shown in the photo to the home, with the help of Probation Officer Mike Healy. This is just one example of the type of work we do every day.

## CSU 22–Rocky Mount

Our team was amazing because of our ability to adapt to the many changes the COVID-19 pandemic presented. We learned to think outside the box and to complete tasks in new and sometimes more efficient ways. Our team became stronger through the trials of the pandemic, and we now know that we can tackle the unknown together.

## CSU 23–Roanoke

The 23rd CSU is amazing not only for the work they did during the pandemic, but for the added challenge of facilitating the consolidation of CSU 23A–Roanoke and CSU 23–Salem into one. They have been flexible, professional and patient. At times, the consolidation has not been easy. However, they remain committed to the youth and families of the Roanoke Valley. “They are exceptional people,” says new CSU 23 Director Kevin Meeks.

## CSU 24–Lynchburg

We found new ways to reach the youth and families we serve and supported them through these challenging times. We consistently looked for the positive



and made extra efforts to give youth incentives for compliance. Despite being short staffed, we looked out for each other, volunteered for extra duties and never complained. We showed resilience and patience with the constant changes and uncertainty.

### **CSU 25–Staunton**

In spite of the challenges this past year, CSU 25 staff remained steadfast in their commitment to serving youth and families. Their dedication, perseverance and willingness to adapt to change was admirable. Supervisory leadership was always present; probation officers successfully managed caseloads and support staff assumed additional responsibilities to help keep everyone safe. Their hard work was rewarded with a successful audit, in addition to staff recognitions. This staff values teamwork and their care for one another and youth is truly exceptional.



*CSU 26's Harrisonburg/Rockingham field office staff, from left: OSS Carolyn Norquest, Intake Officer/Probation Officer Lynne Moore, Probation Officers Jennifer Stores and MacLean Kimsey, Supervisor Amy Darby.*

### **CSU 26–Winchester**

Both Lynne Moore and MacLean Kimsey were hired during the pandemic! We are still down one PO staff member, but interviews are happening next week. So even though the pandemic brought all of us a lot of bad and terrible things, our office now has two new fantastic POs that are great additions to our team.

### **CSU 27–Pulaski**

Staff in the 27th CSU are amazing because of their unwavering support of one another. This staff is the very best at stepping up to cover Court

(even in another locality than their assigned office), covering on-call, and scheduled meetings when someone needs assistance. “This staff is willing to do whatever is needed for kids, families, partner agencies, co-workers and their management team to be successful,” says Director Rob Hiatt. “I’ve always been impressed with their skill and ability, and most importantly, their willingness to share those skills and abilities to help those around them.”

### **CSU 28–Abingdon**

Our staff has been amazing team players. They have risen to any challenge that came up. They met with all their kids, and maintained our office. They carried on as if it was a normal year ... even though it was anything but.

### **CSU 29–Tazewell**

The entire CSU 29 team has continued to stand side-by-side during this past year in order to support and provide services for the citizens we serve. They have persevered during these trying times of the COVID-19 pandemic. Where one goes, the other will follow, through good times and challenging times.

### **CSU 30–Gate City**

Our staff are amazing because of the dedication, caring, resiliency and commitment to deliver services to juveniles, their families and the community during the pandemic. Staff easily adapted to any changes that were required during the pandemic making the transition smooth for the unit. Staff was always looking out for the well-being of their co-workers and willing to help each other when needed. “I am constantly impressed with their dedication and hard work, and thankful I work with them,” says Director Mark Thompson.

### **CSU 31–Manassas**

Our CSU was amazing because without fail, we remained steadfast in our dedication to our clients, families and community, providing outstanding services with a smile on our masked faces. We made it a priority to ensure everyone’s safety: We bathed in sanitizer, distributed some facemasks to clients who needed them, and helped our clients get access to virtual services and virtual school – not an easy mission. We were available by telephone, text and e-mail to clients, parents and stakeholders, many times after hours and on weekends. We took clients to get COVID vaccinations, encouraged everyone to become vaccinated and provided Narcan training to our team. COVID could not keep us down, and we even had 100 percent compliance with our DJJ audit!