



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message from
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Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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The Community Placement Program Local Jurisdictions Show How It's Done Using Resources At Hand

Rappahannock JDC



Left: Art Instructor Emilie Ferran. Right: Program Counselor James Vick leads the discussion at a communal lunch.

The eldest of the eight current CPPs having begun in April, 2014, Rappahannock's program has had the chance to mature into one that is able to concentrate much more closely on local youth.

"When we first started, we had 10 kids – our capacity – from a very wide area, because we were the only one," says Rappahannock JDC Deputy Director Monica Brown. "Now that we're more local, we've seen a big increase in parental involvement. Some of our kids even stay in touch with us to let us know how they're doing, ask for advice, or just say 'thank you.' That means a lot to us."

Rappahannock is fortunate that the CPP program staff has remained constant since day one, which has "helped everyone including residents, parole officers and families buy into the program," Brown says.

In addition to receiving the Aggression Reduction Techniques (ART) program, life skills training and re-entry planning, Rappahannock residents have communal lunches and dinners at least twice a week where they learn basic etiquette and manners. They also have weekly yoga and therapy dogs on weekends.



Rappahannock's CPP team, from left: Senior Resident Supervisor Darin McCoy, RS Jerome Douglas, Deputy Superintendent Monica Brown, Program Counselor James Vick, Program Coordinator Leah Nelson, RS Dexter Barnes.

Blue Ridge JDC

Since the beginning of the CPP at Blue Ridge in May of 2014, the program has served 57 youth. Superintendent Cathy Roessler reports that about a third of those have volunteered at the Habitat Store in Charlottesville prior to their release. Four residents earned their high school diplomas and five earned their GED while in the CPP.



Above: Blue Ridge JDC School Principal Tanner Boyle awards a GED certificate to a resident. Below: Supt. Cathy Roessler meets with a resident in a recently constructed gazebo.

"Many of our residents have made significant educational progress while with us, which prepared them to return to their homeschooled successfully," Roessler says. "Two former residents that we are aware of were accepted into 4-year universities (VCU and Liberty)." A recently added program is a yoga class led by a trauma-informed instructor, who conducts two blocks (once weekly for 8 weeks) with CPP residents. "It was received very well and had full participation," Roessler says. "We also have had several staff participate in ART and EPICS training to enhance our current programming."



Chesapeake JDC



Left: Chesapeake CPP residents write original rap songs expressing their feelings, then record them on a CD they get to keep. Right: Chesapeake's CPP team, from left: Arnold Copeland, Juvenile Detention Specialist; Kenny Gallop, Team Leader; Marc Tanner, Juvenile Detention Specialist; Lonnie Byrd, CPP Coordinator; Elizabeth Blount, Assistant Superintendent; Sam Taylor, Superintendent.

That toe-tapping rhythm you might hear upon entering Chesapeake's CPP unit is the unmistakable sound of rap music being recorded – as well as valuable therapy taking place.

The recording studio was the brainchild of Recreational Specialist Patricia Copeland, who instructs her residents to write a rap song that expresses how they're feeling about their situation (no profanity allowed), and then record it on a CD they get to keep. It's all in line with a positive idea that Chesapeake staff instills in their residents from day one.

"As soon as they arrive, I tell them: Just because you made

a mistake, doesn't make you a mistake," says Team Leader Kenny Gallop. "Then we talk to them about a 'home plan.' We paint a picture for them of a positive life that potentially lies ahead of them, as opposed to setting a bunch of rules. It really provides a positive incentive from the first day forward. Many don't want to leave when the time comes, because they've had such a good experience."

"We're definitely glad to be a part of the CPP," says Superintendent Sam Taylor. "We get to spend more time with kids. We're actually able to make a change in their lives."

Virginia Beach JDC

Residents in Virginia Beach's CPP will reenter the workforce with some high-level skills, thanks to a recently begun post-graduate program that includes robotics, 3-D printing, and several other certifications taught by Virginia Beach Public Schools instructors.

The robotics and printing courses are both taught by instructor Ruth Reynolds, who also teaches "Digital Citizenship," a course on how to use social media responsibly. All teachers will soon be certified to this course, says Community Placement Case Manager Sharmeen Morris.

Also challenging the residents to think artistically, as well as express some of their inner thoughts through their work, is Art Therapist Elizabeth Bates. She regularly has residents do pottery, papier mache, drawing with many kinds of media, and mask making.

"I often can tell what is going on in a resident's life from the art



Above: Virginia Beach CPP Instructor Ruth Reynolds displays items made on the school's 3-D printer, left, and a device that changes colors used to teach robotics. Below: Art instructor Elizabeth Bates can often determine what is going on in residents' lives through their artwork.

they produce," Bates says. "One day I assigned a resident to draw himself interacting with his family. The beautifully done drawing was of himself watching his sister being shot. I referred him immediately to counselors, who could help him address the issues."

Morris reports that family visitation has markedly improved, with 75 percent of residents now getting a visit.

