



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message from
DJJ Director Andy Block

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

April 24, 2017

The Community Placement Program *Youngest Programs Already Making Positive Inroads*

Shenandoah Valley JDC



When residents are preparing to leave after a stay at the Shenandoah Valley CPP, Clinician Theresa Murphy has each one write himself a letter containing his goals, how he feels, what he learned, and some advice to himself for the future. Six weeks later, she mails him a copy as a reminder. "Many of our residents tell me that this really helped them stay focused and motivated," Murphy says.

In addition to what they learned by helping to work in the JDC's commissary and laundry facilities, residents often write about their experience with Shenandoah Valley's "Purrfect Pals" program. This partnership forged with the Shenandoah Valley Animal Services Center brings new litters of kittens to the JDC for residents to help prepare for adoption. "We play with the



Shenandoah Valley CPP team members, from left: Jason Klingensmith, Program Manager; Theresa Murphy, CPP Clinician; Tim Smith, Juvenile Detention Center Superintendent; Paul McCormick, Assistant Shift Supervisor; Ben Mahiri, Resident Supervisor; Marcel Burrough, CPP Case Manager.

cats and make them friendly," says one resident. Murphy says the activity teaches empathy and responsibility.

Residents also are able to attend a music-based church service once a month conducted by the Old Paths Baptist Church, as well as a weekly financial education course provided by the Dupont Community Credit Union.

Chesterfield JDC

When Marilyn Brown became director of Chesterfield JDC, she brought a deep knowledge of trauma-informed care, which she passed along to her staff. Their outstanding work resulted in a National Association of Counties (NACO) Award. "Our training has helped us better understand the youths' experiences with trauma and appreciate the importance of exercising compassion in our approach," says Treatment

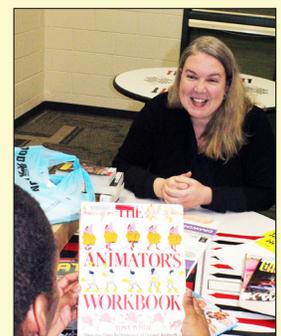


Chesterfield CPP team, from left: Case Manager Amber Nesbitt, Treatment Programs Administrator Darrell Jones, Youth Supervisors Jason Downing and David Vinson, Post-D Case Manager Shaliana McFarland, Clinician Amy Carroll.

Programs Administrator Darrell Jones.

Striving for achievement looms large among Chesterfield's CPP residents, due to the simple yet effective idea of presenting a colorful certificate upon completion of a program or assignment. "Our kids LOVE getting them," says Case Manager Amber Nesbitt. "They proudly display them at the entrance of their rooms."

Chesterfield also has established a partnership with the Chesterfield County Public Library, which sends librarian Ann DeWitt to the JDC every Wednesday to talk with residents about their career aspirations. "The following week, I'll bring in books and materials related to their interests," DeWitt says. "I give each one a library card. This also gets them familiar with what resources are available to them when they are released."



Librarian Ann DeWitt meets with a resident.

Merrimac JDC

The plant and animal kingdoms both play significant roles in the rehabilitation of residents in this Williamsburg-based facility, the first of the CPP programs to begin one specifically for females.

Chickens, bearded dragon lizards, and fish have a permanent home at Merrimac, where they provide sometimes skeptical new arrivals the chance to learn empathy and responsibility. “When kids first arrive here, they usually don’t want anything to do with the animals,” says Treatment Coordinator Sara Jones. “But when they watch other residents interact with them, they come around.”

Residents also are preparing one of two greenhouses on the campus to use for raising plants, assisted by local members of Master Gardeners. Females have a weekly “Girls Circle®” in which female staff talk to girls about issues specific to them. Males enjoy drumming sessions led by Case Manager Joan Gomes. “The residents love it,” Gomes says. “It’s therapeutic for them on many levels.”

“Our cognitive behavior program challenges our residents to ‘think about how they think,’” Jones says. “We don’t use ‘room time’ as a sanction for poor behavior. We use what we call ‘time outs’ of one hour each. Our kids seem very much on board with this – they have bonded much more than we anticipated they would.”



Top: Case Manager Joan Gomes leads male residents in therapeutic drumming sessions. Above: Merrimac’s CPP team, from left: Counselor Heather Miller, Case Manager/Therapist Linda Simons, Treatment Coordinator Sara Jones, Counselor Deltress Searcy, Case Manager Joan Gomes. At right, residents interact with a bearded dragon lizard and a chicken. Merrimac is considering getting a dog as a permanent resident.

Lynchburg JDC

With only eight months of history, DJJ’s youngest CPP already is having an impact on area youth with a strong substance abuse program and aggression management training, says Danny Fallen, Assistant Director of Human Services. Family visitation is also way up.

“The family is by far the most important thing to our kids,” Fallen says. “With the start of our program, our families are so much closer. All eight of our current residents are getting visitors.”

“In the future, we are hoping to get the residents involved in community projects,” says Acting Shift Coordinator Pamela Jefferies. “In the meantime, they attend aggression management and substance abuse counseling sessions within the facility, as well as individual counseling.” Lynchburg’s CPP team also is investigating the possibility of bringing in representatives of a local community college to administer



Top left: Danny Fallen, Assistant Director of Human Services; Pamela Jefferies, Acting Shift Coordinator. Bottom left: Victor Lilly, Acting Assistant Superintendent; Heather Wade and Lisa Hubbard, Family Services Specialists. Right: A dad greets his son at the Lynchburg JDC.

academic placement tests, and are reaching out to the Region 2000 Workforce Development Center for help with resume preparation and job skills.

Four of the eight residents have experience in a DJJ juvenile correctional

facility. “I get the encouragement I need here,” says one. “It’s a little stricter here, but they give us tips about life. We also have discussions about sports, and they’re helpful with schoolwork.”