



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message from
DJJ Director Andy Block

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

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Failure Was Not An Option

In a span of three rough years, Washington County resident Aaron Felty suffered enough loss to make any teenager wonder what life had against him.

It was bad enough that a beloved grandfather and grandmother had died within a few months of each other. But when his mother passed away two years ago, he quit caring about much of anything.

His father Anthony, also stung by the loss of his wife, did his best to provide through his job at a local retail outlet. But he was working hard, and wasn't around much to notice that Aaron had basically written off school, and was skipping every day.

When the courts became aware of his truancy and threatened to charge him with contempt of court, he was assigned to CSU 28–Abingdon Probation Officer Drew Porter. He saw something in Aaron, and went to him with a proposition.

"I told him if he could get his general educational development (GED) certificate before we go to court again, I'll have the charge dismissed," Porter says.

Aaron considers it the turning point in his young life so far. "He was kinda hard on me for a little while," he says. "It took a little time, but I finally realized, with help from Drew and help from my dad, that I just needed to go ahead and get this thing nipped in the bud."

Porter remembers the first few rocky weeks. "There were some times when I think he was a nervous wreck when I came walking in the door," Porter says. "But I knew he could do it, and that's why I was hard on him."

"I didn't think I could do it, but Mr. Porter kept telling me I could," Aaron says. So, after constant urging from Porter, he took the first of four required GED tests – in science, what he



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considered his best subject. He passed it at the "college-ready" level. Newly inspired, Aaron took and passed the remaining three courses within two weeks, earning two "college-ready" scores in the process. He proudly walked in the John S. Battle High School graduation ceremony in May. He plans to attend Virginia Highlands Community College this fall to study to become an EMT. And the pending charges against him were dropped.

"He didn't stress me out like other POs would," Aaron says of Porter. "When you're already dealing with stress, that just makes it worse. He helped me get things taken care of before I got charged. He's a really good probation officer."