



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message from
DJJ Director Andy Block

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

November 21, 2016



Receiving quilts from DJJ residents, from left: Maj. Peter MacRae, Henrico County Police Division; Dep. Chief Pat Gallagher, Virginia Beach Police Department; Lt. Lawrence Gleba, Newport News Police Department; Ofcr. Roger Whitley, Norfolk Police Department; Dep. Chief Eric English, Richmond Police Department; Officer Joseph McCarthy, Norfolk Police Department; Ofcr. Nicholas Castrinos, Ofcr. Farrhard El-Amin, and Sgt. Carol Adams, Richmond Police Department.

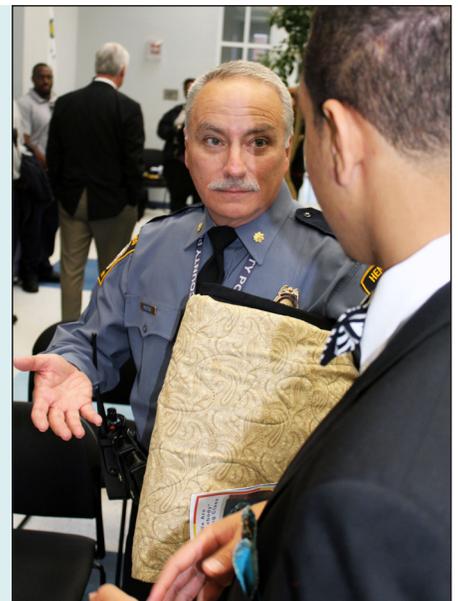
Signs Of Respect With Gifts Of Beauty

Distressed by recent media reports of rifts between police and communities they serve, DJJ quilting instructor Roy Mitchell Jr. started thinking about a positive message he might be able to send to law enforcement. He looked around his classroom at Beaumont JCC students working on their colorful creations, and knew immediately what he would do.

“What greater impact could there be on a police officer who puts his or her life on the line every day, not knowing for sure if he or she will come home at the end of each day,

“As police officers, we are especially mindful of the human capacity for change. In these young men, it was encouraging to see that focus, hard work, and determination led to their ability to create these beautiful quilts, and to the development of self-confidence and positive attitudes.”

— Maj. Peter T. MacRae
Deputy Chief
Henrico County Police Division



than some of the kids they encounter in their communities reaching out to them in a gesture of gratitude and reconciliation?” Mitchell says. ”I decided that my quilting students would honor them for all they do in keeping us safe.”

His students liked the idea, so Mitchell contacted five police departments—Henrico County, Richmond, Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Newport News – to invite them to send representatives to receive a quilt directly from the residents. “It was a lot of work getting everyone together and having the students practice their speeches day after day. But it was worth it all. It obviously meant a great deal to the nine officers who came. And it helped my students see the human side of law enforcement officers, who were genuinely impressed with their work, and very moved by the gesture.”

Following the presentations, the residents and their guests had some refreshments together and an opportunity to get to talk. The officers from one of the departments were so impressed that they suggested the possibility of developing a mentoring program to partner police officers with incarcerated young people being released to their community. Clearly, this opportunity for them to sit together and gain new appreciation and respect for one another was a small but important step toward connecting our communities and improving public safety.



“It seems kind of strange coming from someone who is incarcerated, but the truth is, I have family in the military that I love a lot and family on the outside who the police officers are keeping safe. I am very thankful for that. We want to show you how much we really appreciate you and all you do and that, although we are incarcerated, we still want to say thank you for making all of us better people.”

– Beaumont JCC Quilting Student In Opening Remarks

“These young people are doing so much with so little – it was very moving. Henry David Thoreau said, ‘Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you have imagined.’ I believe that this is exactly what these kids have envisioned for themselves.”

– Ofcr. Roger Whitley, Norfolk Police Department



Left: Deputy Chief Pat Gallagher of the Virginia Beach Police Department displays the quilt to his department. Right: Norfolk Police Department Officers Roger Whitley, center, and Joseph McCarthy thank a quilting student for their gift.