



# WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

Dec. 2, 2015

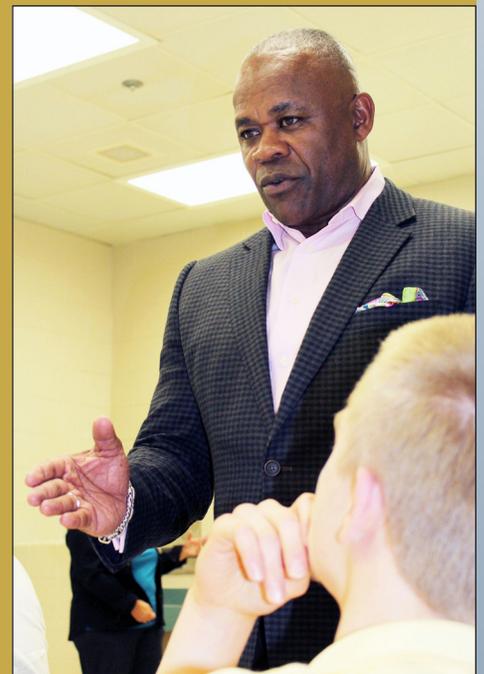
## Filling The Post High School Gap

Program Offers Graduates Certifications, College Courses In Numerous Fields



For Secondary Programs Specialist Reggie Branch, all the meetings, partnership forging and in-classroom instruction crystallize into those priceless career-sustaining nuggets when a resident who has taken one of DJJ's recently-begun post-secondary courses comes to him and says, "Thank you - I never thought I'd be able to achieve something at this level."

Branch reports having already collected quite a few such gems since the program was introduced in August, 2014. Residents who earn their high school diplomas while with DJJ often must remain incarcerated for a time before being returned to their communities. To help these residents increase their chances of finding a career path upon release, the



*Clockwise, from top left: Beaumont JCC resident participates in Service Dog Handler training; Bon Air resident prepares dessert in National ServSafe Certification culinary training; DJJ Secondary Programs Specialist Reggie Branch talks with residents in Introduction to Business class at Beaumont JCC; Beaumont residents participate in CompTIA A+ Certification class. Nine residents have earned national industry certifications.*

DJJ Education Unit partnered with five higher education providers, which offer a variety of programs and certifications. The series of programs, which replace earlier classes taught by DJJ staff that were cut in FY2013 due to budget limitations, have resulted in about 160 residents earning certificates of training, and nine earning national industry certifications.

“Partnering with outside vendors is a good way to provide students with valuable credentials or certificates, and to meet community needs,” says Dr. Lisa Floyd, DJJ’s Deputy Director of Education.

**Community College Workforce Alliance (CCWA)** – Administered through J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College and John Tyler Community College, CCWA offerings include Medical Coding and Billing, National Retail Certification, National ServSafe Certification (culinary training), Service Dog Handler, CompTIA A+ Certification (computer building and repair), Veterinary Assistant, Microsoft Office Specialist, and Fiber Optics and Cabling. College-level courses include Principles of Public Speaking and Introduction to Business.

**Educational Improv Works (EIW)** – Provides instruction that teaches students improvisational



*From left: DJJ Reentry Specialist Sasha Davenport, Introduction To Business course Instructor Ann Marie Hyatt, DJJ Reentry Specialist Lesley Hull, and DJJ Secondary Programs Specialist Reggie Branch.*

and public speaking skills to increase confidence, connection, personal literacy and social emotional learning practices.

**Resilience Education** – Partners with the University of Virginia’s Darden School of Business to offer Financial Literacy class, in which students learn the basics of finance, how to start a business, balance a budget, etc. with hands-on problem solving rather than lectures.

**Technology Ed** – Offers science and engineering programs such as Automotive Service Excellence-Brakes and the OSHA 10 Transportation Flaggers course.

**YouthBuild Program** – Combines

workforce and leadership development that focuses on skills necessary for residents to increase their chances of getting better-paying jobs in the building construction trades. Courses offered include Green Construction, Lead Abatement, Customer Service Certification and CPR/First Aid.

Branch says more courses will be offered where possible to fit individual resident interests and aptitude. Currently in the pipeline are classes in psychology and English literature. “We’re also working on being able to offer some on-line classes,” he notes. “We hope to have this up and running next year.”



## Post-Grad Partners

*Partnerships forged with post-graduate education providers from throughout the Commonwealth are providing valuable opportunities for residents who have earned their high school diplomas and are looking for additional training. Left: Actor Antoine McKay works with Beaumont residents in the Educational Improv class. Right: Instructor Tamara Watkins answers a resident’s questions in Principles of Public Speaking, a college-level course.*

