



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

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Masters of Morale



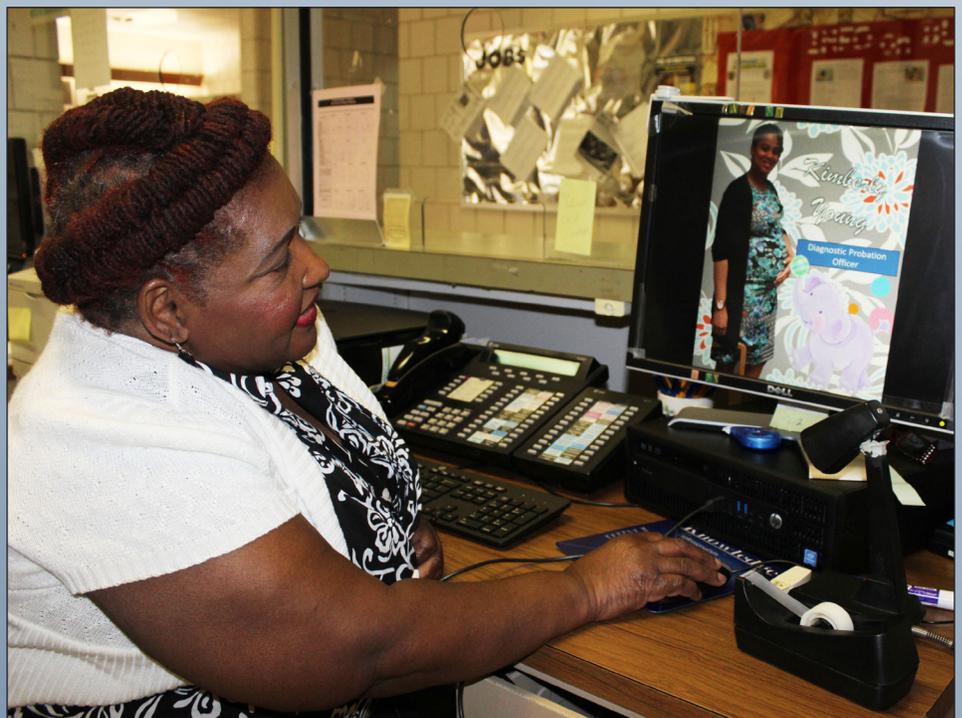
Jackie Allen And Carolyn McKennelly's Creativity Keeps CSU 4 Close-Knit

Above: Senior Probation Officer Jackie Allen uses many occasions, formal and informal, to maintain a strong sense of family at CSU 4. Below: Administrative Office Specialist Carolyn McKennelly works on one of her many creative PowerPoint presentations, which Director Theresa McBride calls "uplifting."

Family support. It's a concept that DJJ is taking more seriously than ever as we implement the Community Treatment Model in our juvenile correctional centers and transform reentry practices in our court service units.

Jackie Allen and Carolyn McKennelly at CSU 4-Norfolk understand that family support extends beyond what we offer to the court-involved youth we serve. It also means providing opportunities for DJJ staff to establish strong working relationships through social activities and employee recognitions, creating a sense of "family" in the workplace.

In Norfolk, the home of DJJ's largest court service unit, Jackie



and Carolyn have taken it upon themselves to turn the “family gathering” into a fine art.

The staff knows that with the arrival of any holiday, there will be a themed lunch to look forward to, often with a fun-filled teambuilding activity that Jackie leads, decked out in the appropriate costume for the day. But it doesn't end just with holidays: Jackie routinely organizes community service projects, employee recognitions, and sometimes luncheons and gatherings “just because.”

At CSU 4, employee milestones never go unnoticed, especially not with Carolyn McKennelly around. Anytime there is a new employee, a birthday, a retiring employee, a promotion, or anything else to celebrate, they can expect to see one of Carolyn's famous celebratory PowerPoint presentations that are sent to all CSU 4 staff. The stimulating combination of colorful graphics, photos, inspiring quotes and poetry never fails to make the subject employee feel very special indeed.

“The work we do can be very trying,” says CSU 4 Director Theresa McBride. “To open up Carolyn's PowerPoint presentations can be very uplifting. And Jackie especially understands how important events like these are to staff.”

“I care about the people I work with and the kids I serve,” says Jackie, who has been a senior probation officer for almost nine of her 24 years with DJJ. She says she started regularly planning employee events when she noticed morale going down about five years ago. “There was a time when we didn't start the day before talking with our co-workers first,” she recalls. “It's the little things you notice that make people's day. If you have a chance to say something nice to someone, it may save a life. One day I noticed that a co-worker had gotten a haircut. I told him how nice it looked – it made his whole day.”

Jackie notes that the frequent gatherings give co-workers a chance to stay in touch and support each



Carolyn McKennelly's inspirational, often whimsical PowerPoint presentations recognize CSU 4 employees, past and present, creating an extraordinary sense of family in DJJ's largest CSU.

other, especially in times of crisis. Colleagues have come to her years later to tell her how much the chance to simply talk made a huge difference.

“One time during one of the gatherings, I shared with a co-worker my experience with a prematurely born child,” Jackie says. “About four years later, she came to me to tell me how inspired she was by my experience. That's the kind of thing that makes doing the events worth it.”

In addition to creating entertaining PowerPoints for all occasions, McKennelly keeps a meticulous photo file of all CSU 4 employees, past and present. All who have retired in the last decade get an invitation to participate in the latest retiree's recognition. “Our retirees stay involved in life of the CSU,” she says. “It's just a matter of letting them know they're remembered and always inviting them back.”

“This is not something I direct them to do,” says Director McBride. “It's just what they do: It's in their core to be helpful and nurturing. They provide for everything out of their own pockets and/or time.”

Jackie has no plans to stop providing her co-workers with events they can look forward to throughout the year. “When I stop caring, then I'll know it's time to go,” she says.



Jackie Allen is inspired to help others by drawing her own inspiration from her daughter, who was born prematurely and will enter high school as a ninth grader this fall.