



WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

Aug. 10, 2015

'You Have No Choice But To Be Positive'

Residents In Community Placement Programs Making The Most Of Opportunity

As Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention Center (BRJDC) Case Manager Jay Boland was walking through the Habitat Store in Charlottesville on a recent afternoon, a tall young man wearing a green vest with the word "Volunteer" emblazoned on the back paused from his work to reflect on his good fortune in being able to participate in DJJ's new Community Placement Program (CPP).

"Thank you for giving me my life back," the young man said to Boland.

It is this kind of heartfelt feedback from residents in the CPP that staff members at five Virginia detention centers have been regularly hearing since the program began last year.

"Down here, there's no negative



Blue Ridge JDC residents take guests on a tour of a garden they tend behind the facility as part of the Community Placement Program.

stuff going on," says another resident who is currently at the Virginia Beach Juvenile Detention Center (VBJDC). "People talk positive to you all day. You have no choice but to be positive."

"Down here, there's no negative stuff going on. People talk positive to you all day. You have no choice but to be positive."

– "Jeremy," a resident in the Community Placement Program at the Virginia Beach Juvenile Detention Center



Left: Habitat Store Warehouse Coordinator Larry Scott provides guidance to a BRJDC resident. Right: VBJDC Community Placement Case Manager Sharmeen Morris talks with a resident.



Left: Community Placement Case Manager Sharmeen Morris and Assistant Superintendent Aaron Knight administer the CPP at Virginia Beach Juvenile Detention Center. Right: The CPP team at the Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention Center in Charlottesville, from left: Jay Boland, CPP Case Manager; Cathy Roessler, Assistant Superintendent; Tanner Boyle, BRJDC Academic Principal; Charlie Edwards, Superintendent; Josh Foskett, Clinical Program Supervisor.

As part of DJJ’s transformation, the agency has been seeking ways to keep young offenders in their home communities whenever possible and serving them there instead of incarceration at a Juvenile Correctional Center. Funding for the CPP was approved during the 2014 General Assembly Session to provide beds in regional detention facilities where young offenders could reside in smaller and more effective housing units.

The agency approached five recently underutilized detention centers: Blue Ridge in Charlottesville, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Rappahannock, and Merrimac in Williamsburg.

“We really weren’t sure what would happen if we got kids who had been at a DJJ correctional center,” said Blue Ridge Clinical Program Supervisor Josh Foskett. “We knew we were underutilized, so we saw this as a win-win. But I don’t think any of us expected the positive effect the program has had on the kids.”

“The program is set up to provide kids one-on-one support toward realistic goals,” said VBJDC Assistant Superintendent Aaron Knight. “Employment, working on relationships with families, being in a structured environment. They’re feeling a sense of pride, and they enjoy smaller populations and more attention.”

“We’re able to provide long-term services to help the residents improve in personal challenges such as substance abuse, anger management, and social skills,” said Chesapeake Juvenile Detention Center Director Sam Taylor. “The residents really like being able to be closer to their families, and we like the families being able to be part of the family sessions and helping the resident to assimilate back into their various communities.”

Monica Brown, Deputy Superintendent at

Rappahannock JDC, said all parties are invested in the well-being and long-term success of each resident entering the CPP.

“One of our primary focuses is to engage families by utilizing family therapy onsite or via telephone, depending on where they are,” Brown said. “As a result, we have seen an increase in participation and visitation by families located in the NOVA area over the past 16 months.”

Based on the program’s success so far, DJJ is looking to expand the program to other juvenile detention centers in other parts of the Commonwealth.



A CPP participant at the Blue Ridge JDC told Case Manager Jay Boland, “Thank you for giving me my life back.”