



# WHAT'S WORKING

A Message From DJJ Director Andy Block

Sept. 2, 2016

## Youth Advocate, Public and Private

### *Whether Official Business Or His Own Personal Project, CSU 24-Lynchburg's Bob Wade Has Always Put Kids First*

Anyone researching the history of youth programs in Lynchburg over the past couple of decades would be hard pressed to find one that did not have Bob Wade's fingerprints on it.

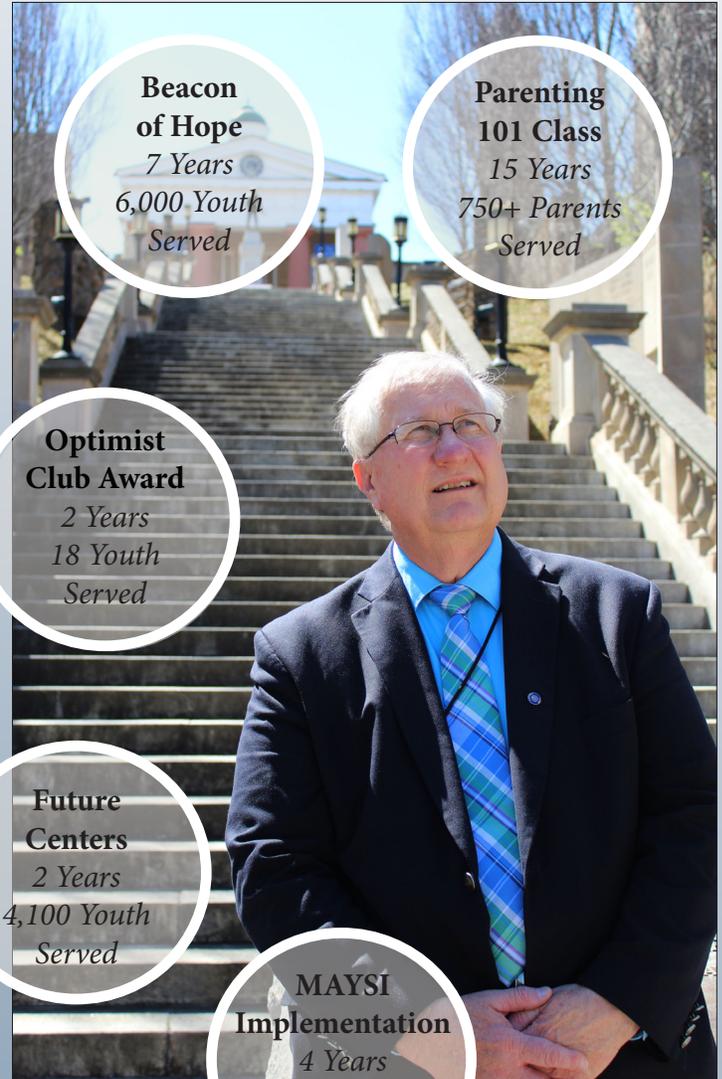
If it serves the youth of this south central Virginia city of about 75,000, then Wade is all in. For the last 25 years, Wade has served as CSU 24-Lynchburg's director, during which time he has spent countless hours of his professional career as well as his private life making a difference in kids' lives.

He discovered his passion 45 years ago almost by accident as he was busy majoring in biology and psychology at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees. "One of the courses I took was Behavior Management in the Home, which required me to work with a family for 10 hours a week for six weeks. I was able to initiate substantial positive changes in this family. It was then that I began to believe I could be a strong change agent."

He took his first fulltime position as a guidance worker in the Kalamazoo detention home. It didn't take long for Wade to realize that he'd found his calling. "I have always felt that we needed to provide new concepts to parents. I started doing that in Michigan, and began to see families functioning better."

Wade was hired as CSU 24's director in 1992 after serving 20 years in Michigan. With his family engagement skills now well-honed, he began creating programs he knew could have a long-term positive impact on the youth of the community. Among them:

**Beacon Of Hope**—Wade started this community-based initiative in Lynchburg seven years ago "to inspire and empower students to change their future, and in doing so, create a ripple effect throughout the entire city,"



**Beacon of Hope**  
7 Years  
6,000 Youth Served

**Parenting 101 Class**  
15 Years  
750+ Parents Served

**Optimist Club Award**  
2 Years  
18 Youth Served

**Future Centers**  
2 Years  
4,100 Youth Served

**MAYSI Implementation**  
4 Years  
163 Youth Served

according to a brochure describing the key strategies help provide post-secondary education assistance: Scholarships, "Future Centers" at area high schools, and college retention. PromiseNet scholarships are provided through a partnership with Cities of Promise, which has identified Lynchburg as one of only 54 "cities of promise" in the U.S. Future Centers are now in operation at the city's two public high schools, where students can drop in at any



Above, from left: Bob Wade and Heidi Vande Hoef in the E.C. Glass High School Future Center; Liberty University intern Garrett Fox tutors students in a math lesson in the Future Center; Wade thanks Lynchburg Optimist Club President Jared Anderson for his support of the "Youth Leadership Award for Neighborhood Excellence."

time to get help planning for their post-high school years from volunteers throughout the community. "We do what the guidance counselors don't have time to do," says Heidi Vande Hoef, director of E.C. Glass High School's Future Center. "Our goal is to be able to meet with every senior who needs help learning how to get scholarships and find a college to attend." "Just to see how this has come to fruition from an idea we had a few years ago is truly amazing," Wade says during a recent visit.

**Optimist Club Award**—The mission of the Optimist Club, of which Wade has been a member in Lynchburg for 20 years, is youth development. Since all the club's youth programs are school-based, Wade just last year asked the Club to create a community award for kids entitled "Youth Leadership Award for Neighborhood Excellence." It honors achievement and leadership at the seven city community centers, the Boys and Girls Club and the Jubilee Center.

**Implementation of Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI)**—In 2012, then-Regional Program Manager John Coble approached Wade to see if CSU 24 would be willing to pilot a new approach to intake. Lynchburg's strong relationship with its local mental health board, Horizon Behavior Health (HBH) made it a good candidate. Working in collaboration with the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services and the local Community Services Board and using funds from a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation grant, Wade set

about testing MAYSI at intake to determine if a CHINS petition could be diverted to HBH rather than filing a petition. "It was aimed at improving diversion policies and programs for youth with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders," Wade says. The use of the MAYSI at intake was shown to be highly successful. Since then, CSU 24 has completed 163 MAYSI screens that resulted in youth receiving the appropriate services and diversion.

**Parenting 101 Class**—This initiative is probably Wade's personal favorite over the years, given how fondly he recalls the experience. "I had always wanted to have a parenting model for the families in our community that needed it," Wade recalls. "So I decided to see if I could get the judge to order a basic parenting class that I would teach." Wade would go on to teach 40 six-week sessions over the next 15 years, serving more than 750 parents, he estimates. "We covered topics like discipline, how to connect with kids in fun ways, and using incentives to change behavior. And I always stressed the importance of hugs and kisses." At the end of each session, Wade gave each parent a "survival kit" of information. "Most of the parents I worked with told me they wished I had done the class years ago," Wade says. Many wrote him letters of appreciation.

Underscoring how much Wade's personal and professional life are intertwined, he is married to the former Sallie Ingram, who worked for many years as the director of the SPARC House, a group home for girls in Lynchburg.

Roses are red, violets are blue; if we have to go to parenting class, our kids should go, too.  
Judges have wisdom, judges are strong; but making us take parenting classes seems somehow wrong.

If I had one answer, one story to tell: I'd say being a parent is oftentimes hell.

I've learned much in this class, I have to say: The biggest lesson is, give our kids hugs every day.

— Poem given to Bob Wade by a parent who attended his Parenting 101 class