



# THE RESIDENTIAL CIRCLE-UP

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

October, 2018

## Soccer Program Kicks Into High Gear



### *Program Creator Sessoms Looks To Expand To Other Sports*

If done correctly, a successful sports team will have strong relationships among its members and exhibit sportsmanship, camaraderie and good communication skills. What better tool is there, Residential Program Manager Maurice Sessoms reasoned, to prepare committed youth to reenter the community?

Shortly after Sessoms started at Bon Air in September of 2017, he decided to organize a soccer team that would have regular practices and would eventually compete against outside teams. There were a lot of residents interested, but staff also noticed that many of them had exhibited negative behaviors and a record of incidents. Many had been in gangs before coming to Bon Air. The final list of

*(See "Soccer," page 2)*

### *Let's CONNECT With Our Youth And Each Other*



#### **Deputy Director's Message**

*Joyce Holmon*

They say time flies when you're having fun. I imagine time also flies when you are too busy to notice.

We're already three-fourths of the way through 2018, and Residential Services has been extremely busy, as a quick look at the following pages will show. A lot of great things are happening for the youth and families we serve as we focus on improving the quality of the work we provide. Transforming the work of our agency is

*(See "Connect," page 7)*



### **Bon Air Considers Regular Parenthood Program**

*(See story, page 4)*



Above: Since June, teams of Bon Air residents have competed against visiting teams from Arlington, left, and from the Richmond Kickers professional soccer club. Below: Maurice Sessoms, left, and Bon Air Superintendent Russell Jennings at a recent game. Right: A team of youth from Arlington traveled to Bon Air twice to play. “They came without prejudice,” Sessoms says.

## Soccer (Continued from page 1)

residents chosen for the team contained multiple gang members from different areas, usually an issue of great concern.

But Sessoms and staff carefully laid out expectations and criteria ahead of time for all participants. All were eager to play, and immediately bought in to the behavior requirements both on and off the field. After many evening practices together these residents learned how to set aside their differences and communicate with one another. They learned how to properly play soccer and how to function as an effective team. They learned the importance of sportsmanship and respect.

Then in June, Bon Air hosted its first soccer game against an outside opponent. Thanks to DJJ Board member Robert “Tito” Vilchez and CSU 18–Arlington Probation Officer Kevin Daniels, a team of youth

from Arlington traveled to play a game against the Bon Air team. “They came without prejudice of the location or for the reasons our team members might be here,” Sessoms says. “It was thrilling to watch both teams play hard for the win, and impossible not to get swept up in the excitement.”

After playing a rematch against Arlington in July, Sessoms arranged for the professional Richmond Kickers team to play the third and final game of the season in September. “We weren’t concerned about who won the games,” Sessoms says. “Each time they get these opportunities, our residents learn and improve not only their soccer skills but social and life skills as well. We all won.”

Sessoms plans to create more therapeutic athletic programs in the future. “If sports can bring the world together, it can bring our facility together,” he says.



# Volunteers Honored At Annual Dinner

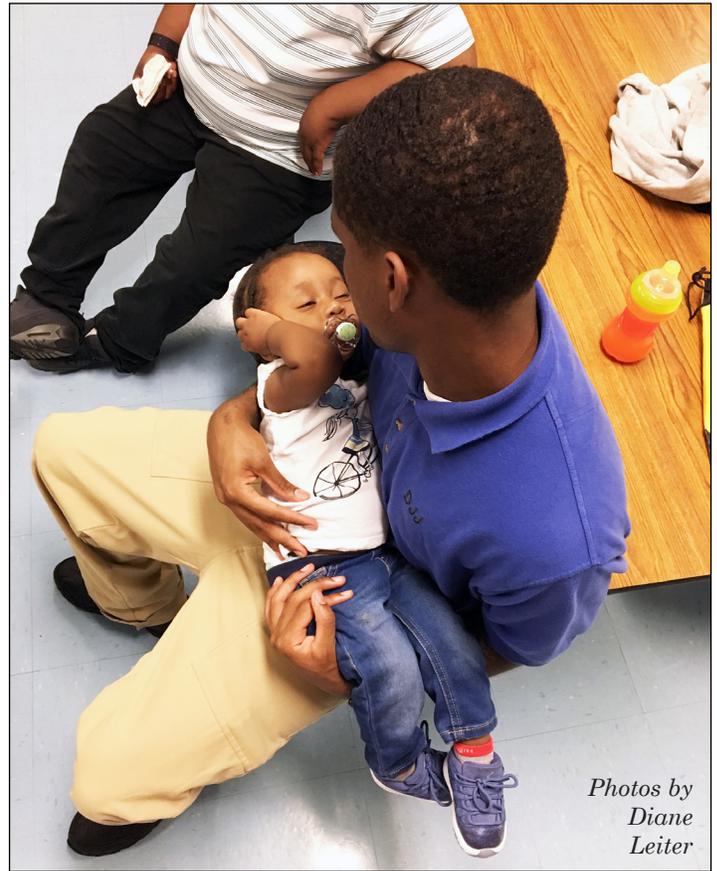
“Volunteers Are The Heart of Our Team” was the theme as 85 volunteers were honored at the annual Volunteer Appreciation Banquet at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center.

Volunteers were welcomed by the Bon Air Superintendent Russell Jennings, followed by the presentation of colors by the Bon Air Color Guard. The meal was prepared by the Bon Air dining hall staff with a beautiful cake to celebrate all that the volunteers have done for our residents this past year.

The guest speakers were Residential Program Manager Maurice Sessoms and a former resident who is now a student at Richard Bland College. Bon Air residents provided poetry readings and musical selections to show their appreciation to the volunteers.

Volunteer Coordinator Beverley Tackett thanked the volunteers for their service and presented each one with a certificate of appreciation and a small gift.





Photos by  
Diane  
Leiter

## Parenthood Sessions Could Become Regular

Bon Air celebrated parenthood in May by putting together a series of classes held over several weeks designed to teach residents with children how to be a good parent and other related life skills. At completion, each participating resident received backpacks with a book and other items to enjoy with their children. The classes were organized by Community Manager Janice Gardener with

assistance from OSA Detra Jones and Family Engagement Coordinator Diane Leiter. The classes were so successful that staff is now considering making the parenthood classes a regular offering. "We have 17 fathers with us right now," says Community Manager Shaun Parker. "I'd love to start a regular series of sessions in which we teach what it takes to properly raise a child."



## More Than 100 Residents Visited At Father's Day Event

High heat and humidity did not deter 279 family members from visiting more than 100 residents at Bon Air's Father's Day family engagement event on June 17.

Staff and volunteers wore their Family Day T-shirts as they helped set up tents, food and other equipment in the preparation of the big event. James River Transportation and VanGo once

again provided transportation for family members. Residents enjoyed table top games and conversations with their families, and then heard guest speaker Paul Taylor give an inspiring talk about how he was able to become a successful entrepreneur and motivational speaker after 23 years in prison. Now 49, the one-time gang leader says he is on a mission

to keep young people out of gangs and give convicted felons a second chance. He organizes basketball tournaments in Richmond and recently moved back to Newport News to form a landscaping company that will hire ex-convicts.

There was cornhole, bowling and basketball toss games, music and family engagement until the end of the event.

# 170+ Attend First-Ever PREA Summit

Deputy Director Holmon welcomed over 170 participants to DJJ's inaugural Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Summit held in Richmond Aug. 8-9. The partnership among DJJ staff and our community partners was demonstrated by participants' eagerness to obtain additional PREA knowledge to ensure residents are free from sexual abuse and sexual harassment within our secure residential settings.

One of the most meaningful activities of the summit was the "Yarn Exercise," which clarified the barriers to reporting of sexual abuse, and how survivors (victims) of sexual abuse in confinement can be re-victimized when they are denied help by the staff whose job it is to protect and help them. It showed that the first few responses victims receive after they report the incident can have a profound effect on their healing.

Cynthia Totten, a deputy executive director with Just Detention International (JDI) along with Troy Isaac, a member of JDI's Survivor Council, presented information on "Sexual Abuse in Juvenile Detention." Mr. Isaac shared his story of being a sexual abuse survivor while in juvenile detention and adult facilities in the California justice system.



*Above: Attendees at the first PREA Summit take part in the "yarn exercise."  
Below: Joyce Holmon welcomes attendees; Cynthia Totten and Troy Isaac presented valuable information on "Sexual Abuse In Juvenile Detention."*



## *PREA Update and Audit Results*

The Prison Rape Elimination procedure (Vol. IV 4.1-3.01) was updated with an effective date of June 20, 2018. The updated version contains the following changes:

Previously, the procedure prohibited administrators from alerting staff of when PREA unannounced rounds were occurring. The updated version expands this language to prohibit all staff from alerting other staff of the rounds.

The update requires that deficiencies observed during the PREA unannounced rounds and

corrective actions be communicated in writing to the superintendent or designee and PREA Compliance Manager instead of documenting this in the logbook.

**PREA Audit Update:** Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center successfully completed the onsite portion of the PREA Audit on May 15-17. On June 28, a final PREA Audit Report was received confirming compliance with all 41 PREA standards. A job well done to all the staff at Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center.



## *Public Service Week: A Time To Recognize Your Amazing Work*

Bon Air JCC celebrated 2018 Virginia Public Service Week with a fish fry cookout for our hard-working and dedicated employees. To provide for everyone working in a 24/7 facility, lunch and dinner options were provided on both Thursday and Friday. We set up just outside our fence line in a lovely grove of shade trees and our Yvonne B. Miller School mascot, Chance the Cougar, even came out to join in the fun.

When planning this event, Superintendent Russell Jennings had asked his staff to embody the spirit of public service by assisting with the meal we would provide our staff. His thought was, "Providing a meal is excellent, but we can kick it up a notch and SHOW everyone how much we appreciate them by serving them as well."



# Committee Meeting To Fine-Tune SOPs

Over the past few years, the Residential Services Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Committee has been reviewing existing residential procedures, recommending any appropriate modifications, and, if necessary, creating new procedures pertaining to DJJ's Division of Residential Services. After the Committee reviews the procedure, the draft is reviewed by the Deputy Director of Residential Services and, if applicable, the other deputy directors. If approved, the draft is then submitted to Director Block for his review. Over the past few months, the Committee met bi-weekly to consider these topics and took the following actions:

**Institutional Work Program** – Procedure reviewed by Committee. Awaiting feedback on questions submitted to Office of Attorney General.

**Work Education Release Program** – Procedure reviewed by Committee. Awaiting feedback on questions submitted to Office of Attorney General.

**Riot and Group Disturbance Prevention and Response** – Updated version of draft reviewed by Committee. Referred to Joyce Holmon. Committee needs to consider a question from Ms. Holmon at next available meeting.

**Resident Grievances and Complaints** – Committee addressed questions received from Director Block that arose during his review of the latest draft. The resulting recommendations were referred to Ms. Holmon for her review.

**Institutional Work Program** – Reviewed forms associated with this procedure. Still awaiting feedback from Office of Attorney General.

*Connect* (Continued from page 1)

full steam ahead. As we continue to move forward we must strive in all of the work we do to meet the needs of our youth and staff in the following four areas: Safety, Connection, Purpose and Fairness.

The second of our guiding principles is Connection. It is critically important for staff and residents to feel connected. Connection can be experienced in different ways. It is important that we each feel connected to supportive and caring adults. In a 2012 article in *Psychology Today*, "Connect to Thrive" by Dr. Emma M. Seppala, she states that "social connection improves physical health and psychological well-being." One study Dr. Seppala referenced indicates that lack of social connection is a greater detriment to health than obesity, smoking and high blood pressure. On the flip side, the study suggests strong social connection leads to a 50 percent higher chance of greater longevity, and also strengthens our

**Work Education Release Program** – Committee's review of the procedure reviewed by Committee. Awaiting feedback on questions submitted to Office of Attorney General.

**Special Housing** – Committee discussed reasons for the use of special housing, current terms used, and existing and proposed regulations; refined the list of approved reasons to temporarily transfer a resident to a different housing unit and to impose room confinement. The committee also discussed the approval process for each type of special housing status and approved re-organizing the procedure and refining the room confinement approval process. Once the committee completes its review, its recommendations will be forwarded to Ms. Holmon for her review.

The SOP Committee is comprised of the following members: Andrea McMahan, Brian McGuire, Demetria Clayton, Ken Bailey, Lakara Johnson, Dr. Lisa Floyd, Maurice Sessoms, Patee Brock, Robin Binford, Ronnie Moore and Stephanie Morton. Thanks to all members and subject matter experts who have assisted in this important work.

## *Certification Audit Was Best Ever*

The most recent certification audit of Bon Air JCC was conducted from Oct. 30-Nov. 1, 2017. There was only one deficiency noted during the audit, resulting in a 99.77% compliance rating. This was the best certification audit in the history of Bon Air. A follow-up review conducted in March found Bon Air in 100% compliance. Bon Air was certified for three years, until April 11, 2021.

immune system. One of the researchers Dr. Seppala mentions is Steve Cole, who conducted research that shows that genes impacted by social connection also code for immune function and inflammation, help us recover from disease faster, and may even lengthen our life. Cole's findings also suggest that people who feel more connected to others have lower rates of anxiety and depression.

These studies as well as others show that people who feel more connected show they also have higher self-esteem, are more empathetic to others, are more trusting and cooperative and, as a consequence, others are more open to trusting and cooperating with them. Social connectedness generates a positive feedback loop of social, emotional and physical well-being.

So let's CONNECT for our success and the success of the youth and families we serve.

## *New Employees and Promotions*

Richard Allen, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Ashley Armstrong, RS I  
Miranda Bash, RS I  
Samantha Battle, RS I In Training  
Rukiya Bellamy, Community Manager  
Crystal Bland, Community Coordinator  
Michael Blowe, RS I  
Carrie Bolton, Program Support Technician-Special  
Education  
Craig Brooks, RS I In Training  
Charron Brown, Special Education Instructor  
Taylor Burns, RS I In Training  
Leanne Burton, RS I In Training  
Jason Callaham, Special Ed Instructor  
Andre Campbell, RS I In Training  
Lance Carpenter, RS I In Training  
James Chaney, RS I  
Chantice Cheatwood, RS I In Training  
Edwin Chery, RS I In Training  
Toni Childress, Academic Progress Specialist  
Roberto Cisneros, RS I  
Roneisha Coleman, RS I  
Dennis Cooke, Biology/Science Instructor  
Kimberly Cousin, RS I  
Christen Cox, RS I  
David Danks, RS I In Training  
Evelina Davis, Student Academic Services Specialist  
Chinesse Depriest, RS I  
Emily Dubois, Executive Secretary Senior  
Rita Dunn, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Latisha Ellis, RS I  
Stephone Evans, Community Coordinator  
London Finney, RS I  
Mona Lisa Fontaine, Special Education Instructor  
Lisa Fore, Program Support Technician  
Delando Gales, Rehab Counselor  
Gary George, RS I  
Cordell Gibbs, RS I In Training  
Evelyn Gonzalez-Ortiz, Behavioral Specialist  
Terrence Hackett, Teacher Mentor Specialist  
Gregg Halstead, RS I  
Jordan Hayes, RS I In Training  
Lekeisha Henry, Assistant Superintendent  
Beverly Houchens, Program Support Technician  
Brandy Hudson, Rehab Counselor  
Mark Hudson, Program Administrator  
Denitria Hueston, Nursing Supervisor  
Shana Hunt-Johnson, Recruitment Specialist  
Mark Hurdle, RS I  
Darryl Jackson, RS I In Training  
Ian Jackson, RS I In Training  
Dion Jamison, RS I  
Tamesha Jenkins, Rehab Counselor  
Barney Jones, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Shomonique Jones, RS I  
Vincent Jones Jr., RS II  
Linda Jordan, RS I  
Mary Klabunde, RS I In Training  
Jay Lane, Behavioral Specialist  
Patrick Lansky, Special Ed Instructor  
Michael Lassiter, RS I In Training  
Dexter Lett, Registered Nurse

Jessica Maddox, Rehab Counselor  
Tameka Malkisedeq, RS I  
Leonette Marion, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Gilbert Marroquin Jr., RS I  
Karl Marshall, RS I In Training  
Khamira Maxwell, RS I  
Rashad Mayo, RS I  
John McMillion, RS II  
Martina Meekins, RS I  
Katrice Mobley, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Dominick Moon, RS I In Training  
Brittany Morgan, RS I  
Demetrius Muhammed, RS I  
Whitney Nance, RS I  
Richard Neal, RS I In Training  
Amber Nesbitt, Rehab Counselor  
Rushawn Parham, RS I In Training  
Jerod Paugh, RS I In Training  
Marguerite Peck, RS I In Training  
Darcel Pemberton, RS I  
Jerksha Petty, RS I  
Joshira Phillips, RS I  
Jesse Phillips, Media and PR Specialist  
Emajuah Richardson, RS I In Training  
Michael Rivers, Instructional Assistant  
Angela Rouse, RS I  
Antony Royster, RS I  
Zena Sampson, Therapist  
Rachel Sandoval-Burnside, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Gabriel Scott, RS I In Training  
Jason Scott, Music Instructor  
Thomas Scott, Mass Media And Production Teacher  
Eva Skillman, RS II  
Khiry Spence, RS I In Training  
Janelle Strange, RS I In Training  
Casey Strickler, RS I  
Yolanda Sumner, RS I  
Kimiko Taylor, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Sheldon Thomas, RS I  
Gary Thompson Jr., RS I  
Sarah Thompson, RS I In Training  
Oderick Turner, RS I  
Sydney Vanlow Jr., RS I  
John Wajciechowski, RS I  
Janique Washington, RS I  
Jermaine Washington, RS I  
Tylaque Watson, Community Coordinator  
Amanda Westerfield, RS I  
John Whitehead, RS I In Training  
Bernard Williams, Program Specialist I  
Brandon Williams, Psychologist Senior

## *Retirements*

Pearl Booker, Fiscal Technician Sr.  
Beverly Carter-Gallop, Assistant Principal  
Helen Fleming, Program Support Technician  
Frederick Fripps, Resident Specialist  
Lorraine Ross, Nursing Supervisor  
Mary Sheers, Licensed Practical Nurse  
Suzanne Swope, Executive Secretary Senior  
Danny Tucker Sr., Security Specialist