



# CPUNITY

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

September, 2022

## Approaching Normal Again

While caution is still the watchword in many quarters as variants of Covid-19 still are making news, we are at the same time seeing some of the normalcy we remember from what seems so long ago slowly return to our daily lives.

All facets of the Community Programs unit showed remarkable resiliency during

that difficult period, and are now returning to more in-person programs and community activities in attempt to re-connect, both with our communities and with each other.

The coming issues of the *CPUnity* will highlight some of those efforts. We will spotlight our Reentry Unit and CSUs from each region as we go.

### EASTERN REGION

### CSU 8–Hampton

By **KIMBERLY JENNINGS**

*Director CSU 5–Suffolk*

At a time when violence and weapon offenses are a major concern in most communities, CSU 8–Hampton Director Ellen Madison is running a program, in collaboration with the Hampton Police Department and Hampton Department of Social Services, called Keep the Peace.

The program was originally started in 1993 and revamped in November of 2021. Youth who participate in the program are referred by the court after being charged with violent or weapon offenses. The program requires the juvenile to attend groups every Monday for seven weeks from 6-8 p.m. Representatives from the Police Department, Department of Social Services, Commonwealth Attorney's Office, Coroner's office or Emergency Medical Services facilitate the groups and share information with the participants that they hope will discourage further delinquent behavior.

Madison says that CSU 8 has been resilient and has continued to provide a high level of service, despite the loss of two beloved employees and



*CSU 8–Hampton staff*

multiple vacancies, especially noting the efforts of Rabiyyah Traynham, Norfolk CSU, and Lisa Rohrbach, her Senior Office Service Specialist.

Two CSU 8 supervisors, Valarie Jordan-Hunter and Elinor Kumah, recently completed the Justice Transformation Institute. Ms. Kumah, whose capstone project focused on self-care, followed through by providing her staff a cook-out, she reported, “just because.” Ms. Jordan-Hunter's capstone was on developing a more effective volunteer/internship program where both the volunteers and DJJ staff would benefit. She is currently working with Human Resources on some ideas.



*From left: Darcy Gardner, Dawn Gilbert, Josh Holbrook, Jennifer Wright, Ginger Hall, Jessica Manis, Matt Smith, Ken Spurlock Sr.*

**By MARK THOMPSON**

*Director, CSU 30–Gate City*

When I was told our CSU was going to be highlighted in the *CPUnity*, I was asked what I wanted to highlight. The first thought I had was our staff. The last couple of years have been obviously difficult due to working through a pandemic but all employees of CSU 30 accepted the challenges and as always, excelled at working with and delivering services to juveniles, their families and the communities. They also helped each other and other offices as needed. I decided the best way to highlight them was to let you hear from them directly! I am very fortunate to work with this team.

**Dawn Gilbert, Probation Supervisor**

–Working with juveniles and families is very challenging, but in a good way. There is no better reward than to see a young person turn their issues into positives. Watching them work through a crisis with their family and eventually be successful is what it's all about.

**Troy Funkhouser, Probation Supervisor**

– Thirty-three years ago, I started my DJJ career hoping to transform the lives of youthful offenders and their families. You don't do this job for the money. It's the kind of job that at the end of the week, I have a sense of having actually achieved something. Even when we

don't see immediate results, we know we have planted a seed for future change.

**Ken Spurlock Sr., Probation Officer** – For 39 years, I have taught discipline, accountability and righteousness, knowing there is always a possibility for change.

**Jason Dishner Sr., Probation Officer** – I started working at DJJ in 1997 when I did not have children of my own. Three of my own children later, I have come to understand that all families struggle and some families need a little extra help to get over the hump. Through the years I have seen a fair share of success and failure. There is no greater feeling than knowing you have played some part either big or small in strengthening the lives of others.

**Jennifer Jones, Probation Officer** – I love seeing the kids reach the goals they set and the families become more involved and their relationships improve. I enjoy watching the kids I work with participate in sports and doing positive things in the community. But when a kid comes back years later just to say thank you and tell me all about how their life is going now – that's the best reward of all.

**Matt Smith, Probation Officer** – While we don't often see the fruits of our labor while working with a juvenile, the reward is knowing that a seed we planted with our young people





*Standing, from left: Probation Supervisor Troy Funkhouser, Probation Officer Clay Price and Senior Probation Officer Jason Dishner. Seated, from left: Probation Officer Ashley Collier, Office Services Supervisor Melanie Cradic-Williams.*

grew into something that's helped them find some success and peace in life as an adult and member of our community.

**Clay Price, Probation Officer** – As probation/intake officers, we are in a unique position to have a direct and positive impact in their lives, as well as the lives of their families. I also enjoy seeing youth be successful, despite their self-doubts, or when others in their lives are skeptical of their ability to achieve success.

**Blake Frazier, Probation Officer** – I enjoy getting the opportunity to correct the path a juvenile may be traveling and hopefully create a positive outcome. The best of all is when a youth I worked with comes into my office to tell me how they have gone to some form of higher education, are working, and then show me pictures of their new car, kids, and wedding photos.

**Darcy Gardner, Probation Officer** – Providing supervision and guidance to court-involved youth is rewarding in that we are contributing to public safety and helping the youth become productive citizens. As a probation officer, I find joy in the youth's accomplishments, whether big or small, and the sense of pride they have after these achievements.

**Jennifer Wright, Probation Officer** – We work with kids from different socio-economic backgrounds who don't always have the best foundation for a future, and I feel that we can help them build a better foundation for their life. A quote from Carol Hileman I always try to remember: "One of the most important things we can do for young children is MODEL the

kind of person you would like them to be."

**Ashley Collier, Probation Officer** – There is a connector between the family and the community, and if we help the youth succeed, we've made them a productive contributor to the community. The support our community in turn provides for our juveniles in every step of the process is never ending, with the end goal to make sure that the youth has everything they need to get back on track to be successful.

**Connie Griffin, Office Services Supervisor** – I find it very rewarding to know we are doing great work to help the community that I have lived in all my life. To me, the work that is being done is very rewarding, and that is what makes it special to me.

**Melanie Cradic-Williams, Office Services Specialist** – We get to see some of the small steps and progress they make in bettering their lives and futures. Also, it's rewarding just being able to help families and letting them know we care.

**Ginger Hall, Office Services Specialist** – So many of the people we see are very anxious and unfamiliar with what is happening, so being able to help people navigate the process, and make them feel more at ease is beneficial.

**Jessica Manis, Office Services Specialist** – I really enjoy helping others. Most times a visit into our office can be very overwhelming due to the family's circumstances. I really enjoy being a listening ear and giving them an encouraging response. Because I am the first point of contact in the office, I feel it is important to get as much information as possible so that the Intake Officer/Probation Officer can make the most of the time they will have with them.



*From left: Office Services Supervisor Connie Griffin, Probation Officers Blake Frazier and Jennifer Jones.*



## NORTHERN REGION

## CSU 31–Manassas

In the coming weeks and months, CSU 31–Manassas Director Kim Keller and her staff will be looking to engage with the communities they serve (which include the cities of Manassas, Manassas Park and Prince William County) in as many ways they can think of.

“We want to have a stronger social media presence and conduct more community events to get to know our community better – and to help them get to know us and how we serve them better, too,” Keller says.

An example of CSU 31’s increased community outreach efforts occurred during the recent Juneteenth observance. Staff transformed an entire atrium into a walk-through Black history and Juneteenth museum that was free and open to the public. Staff worked with the Prince William County Human Rights Commission and community volunteers to create exhibits about Juneteenth, the Black National Anthem, Blacks in photography, Harlem Renaissance, African flags, planning the future, Jeanie Dean School and the book “Ancient Ones.” The office of the Clerk of Virginia provided archived documents that went as far back as the 1700s. The public and other agencies were invited through flyers, e-mail, social media and interoffice correspondence.

“We hope to expand on this concept by inviting more agencies and the community to participate in future museums and events,” Keller says.



*Left: Michael Mallon of the Office of the Clerk of the Prince William County Circuit Court staffs a table. Right: Citizen volunteers Lavern Beck, standing, and Renee Archibald pitch in.*



*From left: Northern Region Program Manager Dee Kirk, Intake Supervisor Greg Porter, Probation Officer Jillian Porter, Early Intervention Prevention Worker Ashley Buchanan, Intake Officer Robin Skates, Intensive Probation Worker Jennifer Sizer, Senior Probation Officer Tammy Archibald, Probation Officer Corey Smith, CSU 31 Director Kim Keller.*



## SOUTHERN REGION CSU 14–Henrico

By STEPHANIE GREEN

Kathy Jones, director of CSU 14–Henrico, paused recently from a busy day to highlight some of the recent projects and accomplishments from her staff:

- Parole Supervisor Scott Willis recently completed JTI Cohort 8. His capstone project, titled the Bridges Model of Transition, has three stages—Endings, Neutral Zone, New Beginnings. Willis is using the model to gain a better awareness of where staff is when it comes to change.

- The CSU is also part of an initiative with the University of Massachusetts that is tracking protective factors. Line staff has completed more than 110 surveys.

- When it comes to Pre-court Services, the staff at the 14th are working to fine tune the initial policy they developed by building upon successes and revisiting opportunities for



*CSU 14 supported a recent fundraiser at a local ice cream shop for Probation Officer Marie Bristow's daughter's school, which received a portion of the proceeds.*

improvement. The parole staff, specifically Roderick Trent and Alisha Winston, are pitching in to assist.

- The CSU is taking a lead role in preventing truancy at schools. Staff are working closely with the schools and Henrico County to address truants. Intake Officer Lisa Janosik has taken the lead on

this project.

“Everyone is moving back into the office and they are working to get used to being present with one another again, post pandemic,” Kathy says. “Staff activities include scheduled cookouts where the staff cooks and/or brings potluck items. This is a chance to share time together.”

## CENTRAL REGION CSU 25–Staunton



Earlier this year, John Painter and J.J. Jefferson of the Bridgewater College Campus Police and Safety Department were tragically killed in an on-campus shooting. They were known as the “Dynamic Duo” as they were not only colleagues, but very good friends. John Painter had retired as the Chief of Police in Grottoes in 2018, prior to joining Bridgewater's campus. They were both well loved and respected by the students, faculty and the community.





*Community volunteers join CSU 25 Supervisor Kimberly Showalter, third from right above and below, at a refreshment table set up in front of their home for bikers participating a memorial bike ride.*

In March, a 15-mile memorial bike ride and run was held in Rockingham County beginning at the Grottoes Police Department and ending at the Bridgewater Police and Safety Department.

The route passed by the home of CSU 25—Staunton Supervisor Kimberly (Koeppen) Showalter, and Timothy Showalter, executive director of the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center (SVJC).

To show support for their law enforcement colleagues and to honor the fallen officers, CSU 25 and SVJC provided water and snacks for the participants, along with signs of support. The participants were very grateful for the gesture and appreciated the support. Supervisor Koeppen also took the opportunity to share the purpose and mission of both agencies with the participants.





## Reentry Unit

### *McNeil To Lead Workforce Development Center Effort*

Ashaki McNeil has led DJJ's Reentry Unit since 2011. She recently was named the Director of Reentry Services, which comes with some expanded duties. One of the most important new initiatives will be designing and implementing a Workforce Development Center (WDC) for youth, and a statewide mentoring program.

In collaboration with the Division of Education, youth will have the opportunity to engage in vocational skills training while in direct care and will transition into community skill programs and job placements. "Our Division of Education will provide our young people with courses to meet credentialing requirements, and then the WDC will provide a space for students to learn and practice the skills to be successful in the workplace," McNeil says. The WDC will replicate centers found in the community and will provide the same services and resources to promote job readiness. To increase the likelihood of our youth being matched to employers in their field of interest, the Community Business Developer, another new DJJ position, will create partnerships with community-based employers to create positions, job shadowing, internships and training programs in the communities in which youth are returning.

"We know that youth who are committed to our system miss critical points in their life when most kids are preparing for their future," Ashaki notes. "The Workforce Development Center will fill in those gaps by equipping youth with the soft and hard skills needed to be marketable in the workforce." Soft skills include such things as communication, time management and how to work as a team. "It's important to ensure youth



*Ashaki McNeil*

also have 'hard skills' like basic computer skills and effective writing that can be listed in their resume," she says.

Ashaki brings to the new role more than 25 years of experience working in the criminal justice field. She began her career in 1995 working for the Virginia Department of Corrections as a correctional officer. Ashaki joined DJJ in 1997 as a juvenile correctional officer where she decided on a career in the field of juvenile justice. After leaving DJJ she worked for the Virginia Department of Correctional Education (DCE) as a substitute instructor and special projects coordinator. Ashaki

subsequently joined the Governor's Office for Substance Abuse Prevention, as the Kidsafe Initiative Coordinator.

In 2005 Ashaki joined the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) as a grants coordinator to manage the federal funding stream awarded to DCJS to support juvenile justice delinquency prevention and intervention programs. In 2011 she transitioned back to DJJ as the Reentry Program manager tasked with managing the development and implementation of a statewide reentry service delivery system that supports the effective transition of juvenile offenders from commitment to parole. In 2012, the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association awarded her the 2012 Meritorious Service Award in the field of Administration to acknowledge her outstanding leadership practices. In 2022 she received the Paul W. Keve Distinguished Service Award for outstanding commitment to providing assistance to families and children of incarcerated individuals in the Commonwealth of Virginia.