



# FAMILY MATTERS

*A Newsletter For Family Members of DJJ's Clientele*

Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

Summer 2022

## 15 Years Of Support For DJJ Families

### *Free Transportation A Key Service Offered By AFOI*

For the past 15 years, an organization called Assisting Families of Inmates (AFOI) has partnered with DJJ to provide a variety of services, including free transportation to correctional facilities as well as fuel cards, bus tickets, hotel accommodations, food, school supplies, holiday assistance, rent/utility assistance, clothing and community resources to families in need of support.

It all began in February of 2007, when AFOI began offering free weekend transportation service from Richmond to the Culpeper and Beaumont Juvenile Correctional Centers. In the ensuing years, service expanded to include multiple Court Service Units (CSUs) throughout the Commonwealth and to Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center. Up until the pandemic, AFOI also provided transportation for families to allow them to be present at important court engagements, evaluations and hearings.

In January, 2021, AFOI and DJJ together created Health Encouragement and Assistance in Reentry for Thriving Youth (HEARTY) to address the educational, social, and mental/physical health needs of reentering youth and their families. The program assists with medically-related emergent, urgent and planned needs/support. It also has supported employment and education needs, transportation and accommodations, clothing, food and the like. Funding comes in part from the Jenkins Foundation and Moses Nunnally Charitable Trust.

“Our combined work has served thousands of Virginia’s justice-involved youth and families  
*(See “AFOI,” page 3)*



*AFOI staff, standing, from left: Chris Adams, Director Fran Bolin, Patrick Link. Seated, from left: Megan Chenoweth, Kamryn Steinruck. Below: Families arrive at Bon Air JCC visitation event via James River Transportation bus provided by AFOI.*



# Meet Our Team

In this space, we continue to introduce you to the people on the DJJ team who are working with your children every day, hoping to help make their transition back into the community a successful one.

## Probation Officer



*Rachel Kancherla*

Rachel has been a senior probation officer with the 21st District CSU covering Henry County/Martinsville and Patrick County for nearly five years. When she obtained her bachelor's degree, she had a strong desire to serve the youth in her community as well as give back. Rachel has worked with youth and families within the school system, at social services and now at the CSU for the past 18 years.

As a probation officer she feels it is her duty to build strong relationships, provide excellent communication and outreach to the families she is working with. Walking into work each day, Rachel realizes what she does for the youth and families she is connected to has an immense impact, and she looks forward to the challenge it presents. She seeks new ways to support the families and youth she works with daily. Rachel can be found on the football field watching her youth play, in the parking lot collecting groceries for families in need or even on the sidelines cheering for her graduating seniors while they earn their high school diplomas.

"To make the greatest impact on our youth and families, it's not just about being present during the 8-5 workday," says Rachel, "but it is also important to meet families right where they are in their time of need, and also to support the youth through the moments that bring them joy and success." For Rachel, the most rewarding part of the job is when youths realize the value of their worth and begin to take pride in themselves.

## Bon Air Staff



*Timothy Schmitt*

Storekeeper Schmitt, a member of Bon Air JCC's Food Services staff, is a big reason its residents get healthy meals. He arranges for the deliveries of quality fresh fruits and vegetables and monitors and maintains proper food and refrigeration

temperature controls at several food storage locations. He also helps DJJ's food service workers pull and thaw frozen and dry food items for all meals. Food Services Manager Barbara Hall says Schmitt was especially valuable when staff shortages occurred during the pandemic, which allowed the dining hall staff to provide meals to residents and staff on time.

"Mr. Schmitt is a great team player and role model who is always going above and beyond," Hall says. "This always makes a difference in our daily meal services."



*Tylaque Watson*

Tylaque is a Community Coordinator for Unit 55 at Bon Air JCC. She began her career with DJJ at Beaumont JCC as a Juvenile Correctional Officer, now known as a Resident Specialist. When Beaumont closed, she transferred to Bon Air as a

Resident Specialist II. Since then, she has become a Community Coordinator. She often also works coverage for her unit, and moves with them to the school and other areas. Tylaque said she took her first job with DJJ because she believed it would be a good place to work. She says she has stayed because she likes it. She enjoys working with the residents, and helping them to find their way. "It feels good to see what they are capable of, and I really believe in building relationships with them," she says. Several have remained

in contact with her after release, often seeking positive reinforcement. Tylaque likes to hear when they are successful, and how their lives are advancing. A favorite quote is “If you don’t stand for something, you will fall for anything.”

## Education



### *Marsha Miller*

Marsha started as a special education teacher at DJJ in 2009 after teaching for North Carolina’s DJJ for many years. She worked at Beaumont JCC until it closed, relocating then to Bon Air JCC. Miller also works with Yvonne B. Miller students who are unable to attend school in person for a variety of reasons. Miller can frequently be seen pulling her box on wheels around the campus. Because she works with all students who might be absent from school, Marsha helps students with all subjects. To do this most effectively, she studies during her free time, especially in the field of mathematics, to be sure she can provide any necessary instruction. Experiencing the student’s role helps her not only feel empathy for students who might be struggling with challenging subject matter, but also with current strategies for learning. She makes sure that all students unable to come to school continue to get library books while they are away. She enjoys being a lifelong learner and reader, and she shares this with the students through her work.

### *AFOI* (Continued from page 1) —————

over the last 15 years,” says AFOI Director Fran Bolin. “We’re grateful for the opportunities we’ve had to support and assist families and children impacted by the incarceration of a loved one. We look forward to continuing our work together to meet needs and make positive impacts in important and innovative ways.”

The pandemic put a temporary halt to transportation services, but plans are being made to resume service. Check the DJJ Family Matters Facebook page and DJJ’s website for updates.

If your child has needs that AFOI can meet, please contact the Reentry Advocate in your area.

## *Reentry Advocates*

The Reentry Advocates serve each region to help prepare committed youth for a seamless transition back into the community. Reentry Advocates help with the reentry process by connecting youth to employment services, providing support and assistance in post-secondary and vocational service, linking youth as well as their families to community agencies for services and ensuring youth have identification documents. Their contact information is listed below.



### *Eastern Region* **Kecia Brothers-Hayes**

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