



January 28, 2016



A WARM WELCOME TO...

our New DYRS Employees who started on January 11!

Shaneena “Neena” Robertson, Case Management Supervisor - Wards 7& 8, MLK

Joseph Mitchell, Contract Services Specialist, YSC

Please welcome them if you meet them around the agency!

EVENT CALENDAR

2/4

Performance Oversight Hearing, Wilson Building, 10 a.m.

2/9

Health & Wellness Fair for youth and staff, 450 H. St. Achievement Center, 1-4 p.m.

2/9

A Parent’s Perspective, Wards 7 & 8, MLK Achievement Center, 6-8 p.m.

The Spring Fitness Challenge

It’s time to work on that New Year’s resolution of living a healthier lifestyle with DCHR’s Spring Fitness Challenge!

Focusing on the renewal of healthy goals with a fresh outlook on fitness, nutrition and stress reduction, the Spring Fitness Challenge is open to all DC Government agencies and goes from January 25 – March 21.

Congratulations to DYRS nurse practitioner Christiana Keke-Ekekwe, winner of the creative name contest for the DYRS team - “Healthy Lifestyles.”

Employees may participate in “Healthy Life-styles” as individuals or on a team of six. Contact Dr. Khandra Tyler-Beynum with any questions, Khandra.tyler-beynum@dc.gov 202-299-3166.

A Blizzard Brings Out the Best

Dear Team:

Congratulations, we survived “Jonas”!! Actually, we did not just survive “Jonas”, but we managed it extremely well. The historical blizzard dumped more than two feet of snow on the Washington D.C. metropolitan area this past weekend. But sometimes it takes blizzards and other challenges to bring out the best in us. We banded together – colleagues, neighbors, families, friends and strangers - teaming up to weather the storm.

Emails of gratitude from staff members came pouring in as the snowstorm progressed. The Facilities Maintenance Division proactively saw to it that youth and staff had their essential needs met, but also worked around the clock providing sleeping accommodations and shoveling the parking lot continuously so staff could get home to their families as soon and safely as possible. Dedicated Youth Development Representatives (YDRs) and staff ranging from culinary to medical volunteered to “shelter in” for the weekend to ensure our youth stayed safe, warm and healthy. They engaged our young people in activities including a snow cookout, sledding and snow angels. Other employees rapidly responded to the needs of our youth and their families in the community, supplying them with blankets, flashlights and groceries, and tended to our young people in group homes to ensure they received the same level of care and attention. We also learned that a staff member located and rescued stranded youth in the community and, despite our vehicle getting stuck in the snow, fed them and returned them to safety. While I say that this is the standard we set at DYRS, this is really the standard that you set for yourselves every day without being asked. And I am so proud to work among you.

I wish I could single out every person whose contributions shone over the weekend, but the list is endless. We are grateful, not just during situations like these, but for your commitment to excellence every day.

All of our fellow agencies in DC Government teamed up to keep the city informed, and apprised of shelter and resources. We’re thankful for the staff at EOM, HSEMA, DPW, MPD, DGS, DPR, DHS and others who also spent time away from their loved ones to provide us with support and a wealth of information. YSC requires a collaboration of efforts, often with DC Superior Court and Court Social Services, and we’re grateful for their immense support throughout the storm and always.

The blizzard, though disruptive and dangerous, was a civic bonding experience. It’s a reminder that when things get tough, we’re united by greater forces. You are truly the best. Thank you for the personal sacrifices that each of you made while contributing to our successful management of “Jonas”.

Clinton Lacey, Director

Positive Youth Development



DMHHS Cluster Feeding

The Directors of DC government agencies that fall under the DC Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services (DMHHS) received a special treat when three DYRS youth and their culinary class instructor, Chef Rock Harper (of Hell’s Kitchen fame), provided breakfast for their cluster meeting on January 19. Deputy Mayor Brenda Donald hosted the gathering at the Child and Family Services Agency (CFSA), where Mayor Bowser also attended. CFSA thanked our youth and Chef Rock, saying “You guys were very professional, the food was awesome and we truly appreciate your services.”

The Culinary class for DYRS youth is taught on Wednesday and Thursday evenings at the DYRS Achievement Center on 450 H. Street. We applaud our youth for showcasing their talents before this impressive audience.



Martial Arts Program Promotes the Power of Words

On Monday, January 25, youth in DYRS' Martial Arts program took part in a public speaking contest centered on topics such as global finance. Martial Arts skills encompass training the body, mind and soul, and Instructor Kevin Woodward believes that public speaking is a pathway to developing leadership skills that will ultimately contribute to workforce development. To prepare youth for speaking with potential employers, the instructor assigned each a presentation that required research (and with no tolerance for plagiarism). Their new learnings pulled them together in meaningful dialogue, and they saw the value in enhancing their conversational skills. Martial Arts at DYRS - not your typical kicks and punches class!

YOUTH SNAPSHOT



DYRS Youth Peer Advocate Nataly Del Valle and Antonio "King Tone" Fernandez talking to the students at Alice Deal about the danger of joining gangs and the importance of making positive decisions.



DYRS youth and staff members Rukie Wilson and Rashida George volunteering with "We Are Family" – Grocery Delivery for Senior Citizens on January 16.



The Covenant of Peace for Young Women

The Covenant of Peace, DYRS' antiviolence initiative that urges youth to address the root causes of violence, took place for the young women at the Youth Services Center (YSC) January 15 -17. A group of female facilitators with similar backgrounds as the female youth population spent the entire weekend with them, sharing their own stories and engaging them in thought-provoking workshops about what led the girls to their current situations. Ms. Kemba Smith, whose relationship with a drug dealer while in college led her to a 24-year prison sentence, advised them to think long and hard about their choices. "They didn't have programs like this when I was your age," she said. A DYRS employee talked about the impact of absence in her own life while her father remained incarceration for most of her childhood. The girls listened as they comprehended the commonalities they all shared; commonalities they didn't realize existed had until they started sharing their stories. As one youth said "I thought my situation was low, but then I heard hers, and it's lower than low. I thought I needed help but now I wish I could help her."

The Covenant of Peace aims to teach young people how to help themselves - and each other - and to address the systemic issues surrounding violence to initiate healing and prevention. Future events are being planned for male youth at YSC and for young people in the community.

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Family Engagement

Getting to Know "A Parent's Perspective"



On Tuesday, January 19, DYRS Youth and Family Programs hosted "A Parent's Perspective," the first of a series of town halls for the parents of committed youth in the community (Wards 1-6). The program included an array of DYRS staff panelists ranging from secure programs to medical, in addition to case management staff. "I'm pleased we were able to provide parents an opportunity where they felt comfortable asking questions and that we had the right staff in place to address them, said Garine Dalce, Deputy Director for Youth and Family Programs. This is just one of the ways Youth and Family Programs is looking to promote family and community engagement this year." The town hall for parents residing in Wards 7 and 8 - rescheduled due to Winter Storm Jonas - will take place on Tuesday, February 9 from 6-8 p.m.

