



Committed to Excellence

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Newsletter.

May 2, 2019



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

POSITIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT

JERRY M. COMPLETION

Event Calendar

- MAY 6** **ANCHORED IN STRENGTH** - 450 H STREET NW - WASHINGTON, DC - 12:30 PM
- MAY 13** **ANCHORED IN STRENGTH** - 2101 MLK AVENUE SE, WASHINGTON, DC - 6:30 PM
- MAY 14** **BOOK CLUB SESSION** - 450 AND MLK 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM
- MAY 20** **ANCHORED IN STRENGTH** - 450 H STREET NW - WASHINGTON, DC - 12:30 PM
- MAY 20-24** **MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK**
- MAY 21** **BOOK CLUB SESSION** - YSC AND NBYDC 1:30 PM - 2:00 PM
- MAY 21** **WELLNESS FAIR** AT NEW BEGINNINGS AND THE YOUTH SERVICES CENTER



GED Test Results

The Maya Angelou Academy at the DYRS New Beginnings Youth Development Center is now an approved General Education Development (GED) testing site, allowing youth to complete their high school education. We want to congratulate Troy C. for earning his GED diploma, as well as Kenny L. and Nathaniel C. for earning their GED high school credential, placing them one step closer to attaining their diploma!

THE ACHIEVEMENT CENTERS Girls Retreat

The Achievement Center staff took 13 DYRS girls on a retreat to Massanutten Resort in McGaheysville, VA on April 17th. The retreat centered on life skills, trauma-informed care, and women empowerment. The participants focused on the importance of self-reliance to encourage increased accountability in their decision-making process.

In addition to underscoring the idea that they can overcome life's obstacles and issues, the retreat included restorative circles, karaoke, ziplining, a therapeutic Trap and Paint session, movies, food, and fun. Peer advocates, credible messengers, care coordinators, youth development representatives, and youth engagement specialists chaperoned the trip and served as touchstones of support to ensure that they had a safe, fun, and productive experience.

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Pathways Career Fair

The Pathways Career Fair is the first in a series of professional development events launched by the DYRS Education and Workforce Development Department intended to help our youth find their path and achieve their educational and career aspirations. The event exposed youth to different potential tracks allowing them to make an informed decision regarding what next steps they will pursue during and after their commitment to DYRS.

Youth had the opportunity to take an O*NET career test, which helps zero in on what youths' interests are and how they relate to the world of work to decide what kinds of careers may be a good fit. Once the youth have a solid idea of what they want to pursue, staff help them create vision boards to focus on their goals and aspirations. For additional information regarding upcoming events, please contact Dana McDaniel at dana.mcdaniel@dc.gov.



Stay the Course.



Code Listen Ensemble

The Code Listen Ensemble performed for DYRS youth at the Youth Services Center on April 27th. Comprised of police officers from the Boston Police Department, teen artists, and mothers who have lost their sons to homicide, the collective shared original music, stories, and poetry. This diverse group brings together law enforcement, members of the community, and individuals who have been affected by racism, crime, and policing. During a community circle, the ensemble and youth discussed the themes of peace, love, understanding, and unity. Special thanks to facility leadership, administration, and Code Listen Ensemble/Sound Impact for making this possible.

CNN's The Redemption Project

On April 27th, residents at the DYRS Youth Services Center participated in a screening of CNN original series The Redemption Project with Van Jones, which focuses on restorative justice. The screening was the first in a series of Sunday Round Table discussions that explore how the restorative justice movement has impacted and fostered healing to those who have been affected by violence. The residents were attentive during the viewing and highly engaged in the discussion. Our youth and staff look forward to next Sunday's discussion!



Dr. Bellard's Farewell



Please join DYRS in wishing Dr. Alsan Bellard a fond farewell as he embarks on a new journey as Director of Children's Health Center at THE ARC. DYRS would like to thank Dr. Bellard for more than five years of exceptional service, joining us in 2013 as the agency's Medical Director and showing tremendous dedication and compassion for the youth we serve every step of the way. Aside from his commitment to the youth, Dr. Bellard will also leave quite the legacy behind. He spearheaded our efforts to become a nationally recognized and accredited through the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NC-CHC), which took a monumental effort by him and the rest of the Health Services team. He also modernized our service delivery model for health services by implementing an Electronic Health-care Record, allowing us to coordinate the best possible health care for our youth. Dr. Bellard was further inspired – and inspiring – as he not only tackled these large-scale accomplishments but also was an ardent advocate for each youth that we served. We always knew that regardless of how difficult the case may be, Dr. Bellard would unfailingly fight to ensure that our young person received the best care possible. On behalf of your DYRS family Dr. Bellard, onward and upward! You will be sorely missed, and we are looking ahead to having amazing community-based medical services available to our youth with your transition into this new role.



Led by DYRS Restorative Justice Coordinator Rashida George, the DYRS Restorative Book Club kicked off its first discussion on April 9th with 54 participants across our various locations. This book club offers staff an opportunity to build and strengthen relationships across divisions at the agency. The books chosen are rooted in restorative justice and are related to the youth and families we serve. The first selection was "Writing My Wrongs" by Shaka Senghor, which chronicles the author and Detroit native's powerful first-person account of his journey to forgiveness and redemption while serving 19 years in prison. The book discussion, which was facilitated in a Community Building Circle format, prompted a conversation focusing on everything from poverty and mental health to the importance of nurturing relationships and systemic issues within the criminal justice system. Our May selection for the Restorative Book Club is "Tattoos on the Heart: The Power of Boundless Compassion" by Gregory Boyle, who shares insight about the gang intervention program that he runs in Los Angeles. DYRS staff interested in joining can email Rashida George at rashida.george@dc.gov. We invite everyone to read along with us and feel free to tag us on social media with your comments about our monthly selections. Follow DYRS on Twitter and Instagram @DYRSDC and on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DYRSDC.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Kenilworth Courts Workforce Fair

More than 30 participants attended the Kenilworth Courts Workforce Fair hosted by DYRS in partnership with the Department of Employment Services (DOES) on April 19th at the Kenilworth Recreation Center. The event highlighted employment-based community services to District of Columbia residents. The DYRS Workforce Development team provided information to residents about locations and resources to learn more about government identification, vital records, education services, hiring partners, drug testing, drug treatment, and where to get professional clothing. Applicable residents will be eligible to attend future professional development training classes that will take place inside individual communities. Residents who have completed the professional development classes will be eligible for employment through the Workforce Development Team partners. Additional agencies and partners such as the DOES and Infrastructure Academy will accompany the Workforce Development team during community visits to provide additional services, resources, and connections for applicable participants. The Workforce Development team will visit identified locations and schedule a "Registration Day" during which all interested residents can register for participation. Ineligible residents will receive a resource guide to assist with obtaining items necessary for professional preparation. Eligible residents will attend a three-week professional development class held every Friday within their communities. Residents who complete the class will be scheduled for interviews with employers or connected to viable vocational partners. DYRS would like to thank Carl Smith of the Resident Council for Kenilworth Public Housing and DYRS Youth Development Representative Johnathan Salters for making this event possible.

May is Mental Health Awareness Month



In acknowledgement of May being Mental Health Awareness Month, DYRS Deputy Director of Health Services, Kenya Key, and the Health Services team invite agency staff to participate in a series of events to raise mental health awareness. Please see the Committed to Excellence Event Calendar for details. Court-involved youth have disproportionately higher rates of trauma exposure than their non-court-involved peers. As such, it is critical that all aspects of the juvenile justice system develop trauma-informed cultures and utilize trauma-informed practices to maximize the psychological and physical safety of the youth. We at DYRS are happy to count ourselves among the agencies that embrace trauma-informed best practices, cultures of care, and healing-centered approaches in our work with the District's court-involved youth and families.

The research is clear: the experience of traumatic events increases the likelihood of developing mental health disorders (such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder); use and abuse of alcohol and illicit substances; academic and vocational challenges; and involvement in delinquent and/or criminal acts. Current DYRS initiatives that support our youth and their mental health journey include the implementation of evidenced-based curriculums that assist youth in making connections between their trauma histories and their behaviors, the adaptation of the "Think Trauma" training for staff, and working toward implementing the Sanctuary Model of Trauma-Informed Care. As we acknowledge and celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, let us remember that trauma affects all of us. Let us take care of ourselves and one another as we care for our youth and their families.

DC Public Schools Chancellor visits YSC



Many thanks to DC Public Schools Chancellor Dr. Lewis D. Ferebee for visiting the school at the DYRS Youth Services Center (YSC) on a guided tour led by Darrell Foster, DYRS Deputy Superintendent of Programs at YSC.