



COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE



May 5, 2016

EVENT CALENDAR

5/8 Mother's Day

5/14 Children's Mental Health Awareness 5K Walk & Rally, 1700 E. Capitol St. NE, 10 a.m.

May 6 - May 12 is National Nurses Week

Thank you to the nurses at DYRS who selflessly serve and treat our youth every day. We appreciate you!



Keeping in Mind...

...that 1.5 million youth are arrested each year, and 60-70% of youth meet the criteria for at least one mental disorder, isn't it time to **let help in?** (www.LetHelpIn.com). It's Children's Mental Health Awareness (CMHA) Month, and the District is encouraging youth and families to open their minds to mental health education, starting with DC's first official 5K Walk and Rally for Children's Mental Health Awareness on May 14. The walk is the first of a series of events that the DC Department of Behavioral Health and partners DYRS, DC Public Schools, the Office of the State Superintendent for Education, DC Public Charter Schools and the DC Housing Authority will be arranging as part of a three year mental health awareness campaign.

"Keeping in Mind" is DYRS' interagency campaign about mental health awareness.



Community Engagement

Senior White House Advisor Valerie Jarrett Addresses Choice and Relationships with DYRS Youth



Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to President Barack Obama, US Assistant Attorney General Karol Mason, and members of the US Attorney's Office (USAO) spoke to young women at the District of Columbia's Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) about the power of choice and relationships on April 26 as part of the Justice Department's National Reentry Week efforts. This visit started with a sexual assault awareness presentation. The girls then participated in a group session with Jarrett and Mason, who addressed their 37-year friendship and the importance of building healthy relationships. "We weren't much older than you guys when we met," said Mason. "The relationships you have when you're young are really important...the choices you make determine the future leaders that you are going to be." The young women enthusiastically engaged in a dynamic conversation where they learned about the roles Jarrett and Mason play in US Government and asked how they might be able to follow similar, important paths. "Well, a lot of the challenges in this country happened over the course of years, and we're trying to fix them in a relatively short period of time," said Jarrett. "If we can help you all just a little bit, and give you the confidence to live up to your dreams, we'll have done something." Both Jarrett and Mason agreed that "we need to do better by our young people because young people make mistakes," a sentiment agreed upon by DYRS Director Clinton Lacey, who had welcomed the youth saying, "You are greater than your worst mistake and that's why we brought you here today. It's a time for women of color rising up to leadership, and we want you to have every opportunity possible to be a part of this." The visit coincided with the agency's new strategy and heightened focus on girls programming and services, which recognizes that girls enter the juvenile justice system with personal stories of trauma, poverty, and physical, sexual and emotional violence. DYRS is developing and launching a trauma-informed, gender responsive program that is focused on healthy development, healing, restorative justice, and keeping girls closer to their home communities and families. The event stemmed from biweekly girls groups that the USAO holds at YSC on topics such as sexual assault, self-awareness and domestic violence. These groups started three years ago to address the specific challenges of young women in the juvenile justice system. National Reentry Week is an effort by the Department of Justice to encourage and highlight the importance of "supporting successful reentry...because by helping individuals return to productive, law-abiding lives, we can reduce crime across the country and make our neighborhoods better places to live." (www.doj.gov)



ORDERLY CONDUCT



Union members of the Fraternal Order of Police hosting a festive cookout at New Beginnings on May 3



**Positive Youth Development
The Covenant of Peace at YSC**

Young men at DYRS Youth Services Center participated in the agency's third Covenant of Peace weekend from April 29 - May 1, where youth engaged in intense conversations about the root causes of violence.

Youth expressed their learnings during the Covenant signing ceremony at the end of the weekend in front of their families. "What I learned is you gotta talk to somebody, get your feelings out, or you'll always hurt," said one youth. Another young man rapped lyrics he had written, "They brought in these men from the Pen to make us understand so we won't do it again" - referencing some of the formerly incarcerated men brought in to share their stories and talk to the boys about not entering the justice system as adults.



The program follows the agency's mission of helping young people identify alternative paths to the choices they made that resulted in them being committed or detained.

Achievement Center Highlights

Staff at DYRS are constantly finding new and interesting ways to engage our youth and encourage them to stay on track. "Brothers in Arms," the young men's focus group that meets biweekly, welcomed guest speaker Donald Stevenson at a meeting on April 22. Stevenson - community activist and DYRS Youth Development Representative (YDR) - talked to our young men about the many facets of fatherhood and engaged them in a Q & A session. Earlier that day, DYRS Youth Peer Advocate Rendell Keith arranged for the Department of Employment Services to host its first Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program orientation at the Achievement Center on 450 H Street, where an estimated 50 youth attended. The orientation at DYRS is one of the many ways the agency is collaborating with its sister agencies and the community.



"COMMITTED TO EXCELLENCE" is the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Newsletter. It is published biweekly on Thursdays. Email Brenda Padavil at brenda.padavil@dc.gov with questions or submissions for future issues.

