



Committed to Excellence

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Newsletter.

September 5, 2019



Event Calendar

- SEP 9** "HRT TALK" - SUPPORTIVE NETWORKS
450 H ST NW - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
- SEP 9** ANCHORED IN STRENGTH - 2101 MLK JR AVE SE - WASHINGTON, DC - 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
- SEP 10** DCRC AT DYRS - 450 H STREET NW WASHINGTON, DC - 10 AM - 6 PM
- SEP 16** ANCHORED IN STRENGTH - 450 H STREET NW - WASHINGTON, DC - 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM
- SEP 18** WELLNESS "HRT" WEDNESDAYS DEEP BREATHING - 450 H ST NW - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
- SEP 19** DCRC AT DYRS - 2101 MLK JR AVE SE WASHINGTON, DC - 10 AM - 6 PM
- SEP 23** ANCHORED IN STRENGTH - 2101 MLK JR AVE SE - WASHINGTON, DC - 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM
- SEP 25** WELLNESS "HRT" WEDNESDAYS - DEEP BREATHING 2101 MLK JR AVE SE - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM
- SEP 30** ANCHORED IN STRENGTH - 450 H STREET NW - WASHINGTON, DC - 12:30 PM - 2:00 PM
- SEP 30** "HRT TALK" - SUPPORTIVE NETWORKS 2101 MLK JR AVE SE - 12:00 PM - 1:00 PM

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



One-Year Anniversary of GunzDownDC

A year ago, DYRS youth reflected on personal experiences of loss due to gun violence in the District of Columbia. They came together to create *GunzDownDC*, a song and movement composed entirely by seven DYRS young people who came together in hopes of starting a conversation about putting an end to gun violence. They painted vivid pictures of life growing up young, black, and afraid in DC, while also offering motivational lyrics throughout the song.

One youth rapped "put the gunz down and elevate at all times (EAT wordplay)... Cuz if we're doing that, aint no need to commit no crime. I know times get hectic and you gotta rebel sometimes, but we are all royalty so elevate your mind. It was school or the streets, knowledge or heat, I pack my bookbag everyday with tools to EAT!"

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y552gfce> to listen to the song, which also features DYRS Director Clinton Lacey. Visit <https://tinyurl.com/y2urxmtn> to read a story in *The Washington Post* about the creation of the song.

DYRS Youth Sit on Restorative Justice Panel



On July 27th, DYRS Youth Council President Shamelan sat on a Restorative Justice panel hosted by the R Street Institute, a nonprofit organization with a mission to engage in policy research on effective governing. The panel discussion focused on needed reforms in the juvenile justice system as well as criminal justice policy.

Shamelan shared insight about being on probation and offered suggestions regarding juvenile justice reforms that she thinks could benefit other youth involved in the juvenile justice system. DYRS Program Manager of Strategic Planning and Partnerships Asante Laing also discussed trends, current DYRS initiatives, and shared suggestions about continued reforms that could also improve the current system. DYRS would like to highlight this positive youth development and thank Shamelan for making time to give back.

Pathways Program Partners with DC Re-engagement Center

The DYRS Pathways Program launched a partnership with the DC Reengagement Center (DCRC), currently under the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). This program is for youth ages 16-24 who are not currently enrolled in school, reside in the District of Columbia or are wards of DC, and have no high school diploma or GED. DCRC will help identify educational supports, assist with re-enrollment processes, and provide ongoing support for at least a year after enrollment.

DYRS hosted intake sessions for this program at the MLK and 450 Achievement Centers on August 4th and 19th. Staff were able to enroll a total of 12 youth for the DCRC at DYRS. Upcoming sessions will be held on September 10th at 450 H Street NW from 10 am - 6 pm and on September 19th at our MLK Achievement Center at 2101 Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. from 10 am - 6 pm. Beyond those dates, the DCRC sessions will be held the 1st Tuesday of the month at 450 H Street NW and the 3rd Thursday of the month at the MLK Achievement Center.

"Incorporating the DC Reengagement Center with the Pathways program allows for our youth to further prepare and plan for their post-secondary education while allowing staff to monitor the quality and effectiveness of educational supports," said the Office of Workforce Development and Education Program Analyst Sammy Sanchez, who is the DYRS point of contact for the DC Reengagement Center at DYRS. For more information, call Mr. Sanchez at (202) 258-0294 or via email at sammy.sanchez@dc.gov.

DYRS Group Homes Receives Visit from the Deputy Mayor of Public Safety and Justice



On August 28th, Deputy Mayor for Public Safety and Justice Kevin Donahue toured DYRS group homes Umbrella House and Universal Healthcare's Day Break's home along with DYRS Director Clinton Lacey. The purpose of the tours was to gain a better understanding of what is working well with residential placements. Deputy Mayor Donahue engaged vendor staff as well as DYRS staff in a discussion on how to improve outcomes for DC families.

What Juvenile Justice Needs: Care, Not Cages



DYRS Director Clinton Lacey highlights the positive impact that the DYRS Credible Messenger Initiative has had on our youth in an op-ed in *Governing*. "We need a new vision for youth justice, one with love as its organizing principle that defines healing, restoration, and renewal as its core objectives. This vision challenges the notion that youth who have been involved in and impacted by violence must be incarcerated to achieve public safety. In short, such a new vision asks what we would want for our own children," writes Director Lacey.

The piece explores how deterring from traditional punitive methods can drastically change outcomes in a positive way for juveniles involved in the criminal justice system, while also highlighting the positive impact that the DYRS Credible Messenger initiative has had. Credible Messengers are community-rooted transformative mentors whose similar life experiences help engage youth in positive community involvement while devising a realistic but demanding plan to keep them from incarceration. The program successfully engaged 327 youth and families in fiscal year 2018 and plans to continue to redefine justice for youth.

Visit the following link to read the article in its entirety: <https://tinyurl.com/y5tn5s65>

Shamelen and Jovani Start Their Freshman Year of College



"I am pleased to say that Shame-len and Jovani successfully completed their college orientation at Virginia State

University, which was July 22-23. The students received their student IDs and fall semester schedules. They moved into their dormitories on August 9th and began classes on August 19th. This is a proud time for the agency as we continue to make strides in becoming the preeminent juvenile justice agency in the country. We will continue to push the envelope and be change agents for the District."

– DYRS Youth Engagement Specialist Rendell Keith with the Office of Education and Workforce Development



DYRS Unity Day Trip to Cameron Run

The DYRS Achievement Centers wrapped up their summer enrichment activities with Family Days of Unity at Cameron Run Park. DYRS staff coordinated two trips to the amusement park in Alexandria, Virginia for committed youth and their families from our MLK and 450 Achievement Centers on August 15th and August 22nd.

DYRS Care Coordinators, Credible Messengers, and Achievement Center staff worked together to plan a successful activity. The Unity Days were a huge success thanks to the coordination and collaboration efforts of nearly 150 youth, their families, and staff.

Thanks to collaborative efforts, the Achievement Centers were able to deliver wonderful summer activities with a combined total of approximately 225 people participating throughout the summer. Staff look forward to keeping this momentum up during the upcoming school year.



The annual DYRS Back to School event for committed youth took place on August 20th focusing on the distribution of backpacks, school supplies, and resources from vendors for the school year. Achievement Center staff worked together to stuff backpacks full of school supplies and hygiene products to ensure that our youth are ready for this school year. Youth and their families learned about helpful school tips and got a chance to win prizes as part of a trivia activity while enjoying food and refreshments, including complimentary Rita's Italian Ice.

On August 21st, DYRS youth received complimentary haircuts gifted by professional barber Tyrell Guinyard at the Achievement Center at 450 H Street NW. DYRS's youth also took advantage of free hairstyling services provided by Luxe Cosmetics Beauty Bar of Temple Hills. Ladies had the option to choose from braided styles, blowouts, and roller sets. DYRS would like to thank all the vendors that participated in the Back to School events to help set our youth up for success this school year.

Introducing the New Certified Victim Advocate



In addition to Tanya Logan's role as one of DYRS's behavioral health practitioners for the Youth Service Center (YSC), Ms. Logan now serves as a PREA Victim Advocate. Ms. Logan participated in a 25-hour training session through Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) June 17 – 20. As a Certified Victims Advocate, Ms. Logan will provide professional support and services to victims of crime when a need arises.

"As a Victim Advocate for YSC, I am committed to providing the highest possible level of care," she said. "I will provide comprehensive support and resources to ensure that the youth that we support are treated with respect and dignity. I will also listen as they regain their voice and sense of empowerment."

THE GRASS IS GREENER

"We began the Grass is Greener on the Other Side program on June 1st and concluded on August 31st, offering biweekly services to 19 seniors throughout the DC area. Youth Development Representative Jer-mall Morgan provided excellent counseling skills about life situations as well as hands-on training.

We were able to assist 19 seniors every other weekend the entire summer, never missing one weekend. Supervisory Youth Development Representative Ernest Waiters and Superintendent Mark Hamlett were so valuable in assisting me with staffing. This was a very rewarding year due to the severity of our seniors' disabilities and we as an agency were able to provide some solace. Some of our seniors were struggling to feed themselves, let alone pay for lawn care. We received several calls from Councilmembers' offices seeking our assistance and did the very best we could. This program continues to flourish and foster goodwill in the community and with our residents. Thank you all from top to bottom for your support."

– DYRS Maintenance Lead Carl Matthews

Thank You, Team DYRS

Since DYRS became a cabinet-level agency in 2005, the agency has become an international leader in juvenile justice reform. We recognize that the hard work of dedicated employees has made this remarkable transformation possible. This week we celebrated Labor Day. We join in that celebration and honor you for contributing to our youth in ways that cannot be fully articulated in words. But know that due to all of your hard work, we have - and will continue - to accomplish great things when we work together. Thank you for the dedication you bring to our youth and families every day.

– Adam Aljoburi, DYRS Chief of Staff



DYRS Staff and Youth Attend a Screening of Brian Banks

On August 20th, DYRS staff, youth, and families were invited to a screening of the film *Brian Banks*. The film is an inspirational true story following a young aspiring NFL football player who was wrongfully convicted of a crime he didn't commit and his long battle for justice. The film examines many relevant issues including lack of legal education and representation, youth being tried and sentenced as adults, and the impact of mentors and role models for youth.

"As DYRS employees, we must have an open mind when interacting with youth and not be judgmental. Our communication with youth must be positive at all times, and although sometimes the interaction is very brief, the impact of our interactions or interventions may resonate with them indefinitely," said DYRS Assistant Program Manager Dr. John Sandy.

"We must have faith in their stories and encourage them to transform their lives. We must be prepared to go the extra mile and sometimes think outside the box when providing services. Our youth, like Brian, must let go of all anger and bitterness, and make use of the plethora of services being offered to them."