



# Committed to Excellence

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Newsletter.

October 11, 2018



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

POSITIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT

JERRY M. COMPLETION

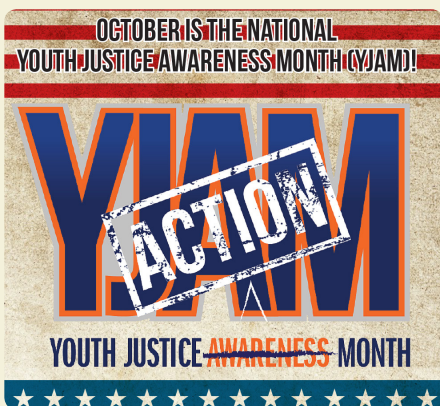
## The Advice of Elders



The DYRS Learning Community Elders Council gathered together for their final meeting Monday, September 24. The Elders Council, a collection of hand-picked District Community leaders brought in to bridge the intergenerational gap between youth and elders, met weekly since March to provide the agency with informed recommendations on all topics pertaining to DYRS. The result of the weekly discussions culminated in a presentation for DYRS Leadership. The Council presented on topics such as:

- Behavioral Health
- Programming for Title 16 Youth
- Rites of Passage
- The Credible Messenger Program
- Family Support and Engagement

*Photo: Elders Council members: James Also-brooks, Roach Brown, Donald Isaac, Ivy Hylton, Brenda Jones, Tyrone Parker, John Robinson, Rico Rush, Elwood Yango Sawyer, Eddie Van, James Wesley.*



Visit [campaignforyouthjustice.org/yjam/](http://campaignforyouthjustice.org/yjam/) to learn more!



*New Beginnings Youth Development Center staff enjoy food trucks and participate in yoga sessions as part of the facility's ongoing efforts building positive staff morale.*



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

### Not Just the Messenger

The National Credible Messenger Summit took place from October 1-4 in Washington DC, bringing together like-minded leaders to form a common vision and network for Credible Messengers. More than 175 Credible Messengers from all across the country convened to formally define the meaning of a Credible Messenger is, establish best practice standards for the work, and discuss future aspirations to maximize change in the communities served around the country. Through interactive workshops, plenary sessions, and mindful moments, attendees articulated their experiences, lessons learned, and goals for their communities. This incredible four-day experience built a foundation for the future of the Credible Messenger Initiative nationwide.



### Mentoring Mondays

Omega Gold Development Group is dedicated to reducing and eradicating recidivism among youth currently residing at New Beginnings Youth Development Center, with "Mentoring Mondays" group sessions. These sessions offer youth an opportunity to examine the impact of their life choices and provide them with an understanding of the role their life experiences play in shaping their views. They expressed how their life choices played a role in their commitment to DYRS at New Beginnings. The young people recognized challenges they faced, thought about the impact of their positive and negative experiences, and determined to begin the healing process from each bad decision. A popular and important exercise consisted of youth expressing themselves through creative rap and poetry. Several young people took to the floor and impressed many by verbally articulating their thoughts.

The end of summer sessions dealt with the youth identifying characteristics they look for when selecting a friend, as friends may ultimately determine the path taken in life through peer pressure. They had an in-depth discussion of what a friend is by identifying and writing down "five things a friend would do" and "five things a friend wouldn't do." The exercise helped them better understand what a true friend is, how to choose a friend wisely, and why it isn't important to select friends simply because they're popular. In helping youth make better decisions, DYRS hopes that the Omega Gold Development Group assists the agency's greater mission of providing youth with the tools to build their life.

### Understanding Each Other

On Sunday, September 23, New Beginnings youth participated in a restorative justice event for all youth. The occasion opened with a restorative circle to set the tone for a "no beef zone" in an effort to facilitate daily programming and school attendance in the safest environment possible. It gave all youth a chance to positively engage and demystify the arrival of the Title 16 population, as well as a chance to participate in team building activities in which all youth worked well together. Staff offered words of encouragement, youth played a fun and spirited basketball game was played, and the event ended with heartfelt words of encouragement by our young people, as well a song by Journey girls unit resident C.G. The event turned out to be a great success to the credit of the New Beginnings family - youth, staff, leadership, and community supporters. New Beginnings thanks all who supported!



## Trauma and Self Care



On September 7, DYRS' PREA Outreach team sponsored two trauma-informed training sessions specifically for behavioral health and medical staff at the Youth Services Center, through the BYRNE Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) grant. The first session exposed staff to the history of violence against women as it relates to African Americans. It helped staff understand how African Americans respond to and recall traumatic events, and how working with trauma survivors of African American descent through a lens of cultural awareness allows the survivor, the medical/mental health staff, and victim advocate staff an opportunity to reach a mutual place that is beneficial to the survivor. The second session helped participants become aware of the effects of serving trauma victims and the risk of Compassion Fatigue, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and Burnout. Participants left the workshop refreshed with a sense of renewed commitment, and relief in a greater understanding of how to care for themselves.

In addition, through a collaborative working relationship between DYRS PREA Coordinator, Nancy Fisher, and DC Department of Corrections (DOC) PREA Coordinator, Cicily Harrington, DOC staff participated in the training. Ms. Harrington and her teammate, DOC Victim Advocate Keisha Culbreth-Brooks, shared their experiences working with adults and juveniles within the roles in which they play at the DC Jail. Ms. Culbreth-Brooks formed a relationship with DYRS Victim Advocate Christine Daniel as well, enhancing the great relationship between DYRS and DOC.

"Thank you for giving us the opportunity to receive such a phenomenal training," stated Ms. Harrington. Ms. Daniel said, "Thank you Ms. <Indira> Henard, <Executive Director of DC Rape Crisis Center (DCRCC)>, your training is invaluable. Self-care to avoid vicarious trauma is a huge part in making myself better equipped to support, help, and love our residents who may have experienced trauma."

The DC DOC and DYRS PREA Coordinators will be collaborating on future projects. Stay tuned!

*Photo: Left to right: DYRS Victim Advocate Christine Daniel; DC DOC Victim Advocate Keisha Culbreth-Brooks; DCRCC Executive Director – Indira Henard; DC DOC PREA Coordinator Cicily Harrington*



On Monday, September 17, fellows from the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative's (ABA ROLI) Criminal Justice Collaboration and Partnership (CJ-CAP) Program visited DYRS' Achievement Centers to learn about efforts in sustainable, long-term change through a coordinated approach to tackling cross-sectoral criminal justice problems. One of the attendees stated "CJ-CAP is a fellowship program supported by the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) that brings small groups of criminal justice sector professionals representing multiple agencies to the US for approximately a month...to learn from/exchange with US counterparts, and work together as a group on developing a reform plan on a cross-cutting criminal justice issue in their home country. For our inaugural class, we have a group from Armenia representing five different agencies to work on the issue of pretrial detention reform and alternatives to incarceration." DYRS welcomes all visitors from around the world to collaborate in its efforts toward juvenile justice reform.



## POSITIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### The Splendor of Vendors and Volunteers

On October 9, the Youth Services Center hosted its 2nd Annual Volunteers and Vendors Appreciation Dinner. The event honored all of YSC'S vendors and volunteers who continue to show what love looks like at the DYRS facility. All attendees received certificates of appreciation from Superintendent Jannifer Nevilles and Deputy Superintendent Darrell Foster. Our young residents gave powerful testimony regarding the impact that all of our vendors and volunteers do week in and week out in working with them, and YSC's very own resident A.B had "the gym rocking" when she performed.



### Exceeding Expectations at the Exit Rally

On Tuesday, September 18, staff from all over the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Center (DYRS) descended upon its Youth Service Center and New Beginnings Youth Development Centers to participate in the Jerry M Exit Rally. Staff had the opportunity to learn about the history of Jerry M as their colleagues educated them about the remaining four work plan goals that will allow DYRS to exit the Jerry M consent decree. Each rally kicked off at noon with goals of understanding, outreach, and advocacy in mind. The spirit of exiting the consent decree filled the air throughout the afternoon. All staff look forward to the day of celebration for meeting the remaining goals and setting the standard for juvenile justice reform in the country.



### Live FIT, Love Life!

The 450 Achievement Center held its annual "Live FIT, Love Life!" health fair, hosted by DYRS Supervisory Dietician, Kimelia Austin. Numerous health care providers including Aetna, United Health Care, and Kaiser Permanent did on-site registration for health care services. Vida Fitness group provided our staff a Zumba workout. All participants enjoyed free salad from Chop't and healthy choice smoothies from Smoothie King. DYRS promotes health fairs across its locations as part of its health and wellness efforts for its employees!



The Youth Council invites all staff to volunteer and to meet its leadership team during its meetings. Cognizant that it takes a village to help our young people to focus on positivity versus the negative influences they are facing today, the Youth Council needs your support with volunteering events! Events are on a first come, first serve basis so reach out to Nataly Del Valle if you're interested. Have an idea for chap-eroning a Youth Council volunteering event? Contact Nataly at nataly.delvalle@dc.gov or (202) 207-7124.

#### Youth Council Outreach - October 2018:

October 20, 2018 - Art Expression Event, Bus Boys and Poets, Open Mic, 4pm-7pm

October 26, 2018 - Youth Council Leadership Meeting, MLK Achievement Center, 4pm-6pm

★ ★ ★ DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH REHABILITATION SERVICES ★ ★ ★

Email Brenda Padavil, Communications Director at [brenda.padavil@dc.gov](mailto:brenda.padavil@dc.gov) with questions or submissions for future issues.

