



# Committed to Excellence

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Newsletter.

September 14, 2018



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

POSITIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

FAMILY EMPOWERMENT

JERRY M. COMPLETION

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**EXIT**

*Rally* SEP 18 2018

- IS -

**TOMORROW**

## YSC Spotlight

Youth Services Center



### POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

#### Natural W.O.M.A.N

Young ladies in Pod A100 at the Youth Services Center (YSC) are taking massive action to get healthy through the W.O.M.A.N <Working Out to take Massive Action Now> program at the Youth Services Center (YSC). W.O.M.A.N is a four-week fitness series for female residents instructed by Youth Development Representative (YDR) Tara Murray and Mental Health Specialist Shiresse Brewington. Together, they teach YSC's female residents healthy eating and workout habits. The residents complete individual and partner exercises in each session that end with a proper cool down and nutritious refreshments. The program aims to promote physical fitness, team work, healthy living and wellness. Upon completion of the program, each resident earns a certificate of completion, an official W.O.M.A.N Program t-shirt -- and some even received the opportunity to co-lead exercises with official W.O.M.A.N. Jr. "Instructor" tees. DYRS applauds YSC's efforts at keeping our young ladies healthy and teaching them the importance of treating the mind, body, and soul.



#### Spike Balls Not Crime

On Tuesday, August 28, the Youth Services Center (YSC) hosted Project Help for Society's "#spikeballsnotcrime Volleyball Charity Tournament" in the YSC gymnasium. (The event also gave honor to International Youth Day, observed yearly on August 12). This volleyball event brought all YSC youth together in one room and focused on each youth's growth. It also highlighted their talents and eagerness to participate in team sports, and served as a morale booster for both staff and residents. Although youth housed in the D200 unit came out as the champions - beating out both staff and other participating youth - everyone left as winners. All YSC staff members also donated basic school necessities to benefit kids and their families during this back to school season. "Winners are motivated by the desire to achieve," said Supervisory Youth Development Representative Woodrow Sheffield. "And our YSC family made remarkable achievements as a result of this event."

#### On Another Level

YSC Level Five residents enjoyed a movie night on September 6 as a reward for reaching Level 5 in the facility's Token Economy program. They enjoyed various snacks and a chance to be out with each other and engaging with one another while watching the highly acclaimed movie "Black Panther."







## New Song by Youth Calls for Peace and End to Violent Crime

The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) announced the release of “GunzDown DC,” a song that speaks to the fear and frustration many young people in Washington, DC and across the nation experience as a result of gun violence and calls for an end to violent crime. The song is written, produced, and performed entirely by DYRS youth and supports Mayor Muriel Bowser’s Safer, Stronger DC public safety agenda.

“At DYRS, we are engaged in a struggle to grow peace, wellness, opportunity, and productivity in the lives of our youth, families, and communities,” said DYRS Director Clinton Lacey. “GunzDown is a call to action from young people with a clear message: ‘put the guns down, let’s respect one another, and let’s love ourselves, our families, and our community.’ I’m proud of the stance that they are taking, and I pray that we will all listen.”

As the agency responsible for the supervision, custody, and care of young people charged with a delinquent act in the District, DYRS has extensive experience working with DC youth affected by the trauma of gun violence – in many cases, throughout their lives. “GunzDown DC” is informed by the life experience of DYRS youth and their desire to speak out against violent crime and illegal firearms.

The song also complements DYRS’ Credible Messenger Initiative, through which adults with similar life experiences provide mentorship and support to DYRS youth and their families. Credible messengers, whose role is to help youth transform attitudes and behaviors around violence, serve as neighborhood leaders and youth advocates.

It is DYRS’ hope that the song will grow into a citywide anti-gun violence campaign for the District of Columbia, building on the powerful experiences voiced by each youth featured in the song, but focusing on the larger mission – getting the guns off the streets and out of the wrong hands. Please put the guns down.



The Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) Office of Human Resources announces Lennie Moore as Human Resources Officer III.

Lennie possesses more than 20 years of human resources and organizational development experience. At DYRS since 2016, some of his roles include the oversight of areas such as Recruitment, Position Management, Organizational Development, Employee Engagement, and Payroll, which resulted in the agency achieving one of its lowest vacancy rates in four years. Lennie also served as DYRS’ Interim Training Director.

Please join the agency in congratulating Lennie as he moves into this role and for taking on these new responsibilities.



## Father’s Breaking Bread at Breakfast

On Saturday, August 25, DYRS hosted its first weekend fathers’ breakfast! Jonathan McNair & Tony Lewis Jr. led a discussion centered on outreach strategies to identify, locate, and contact the biological fathers and or male relatives of the youth currently in the care and custody of DYRS. This undertaking (the father’s weekend breakfast/support group) is expected to afford fathers the opportunity to speak honestly and openly about the struggles of being a “good dad,” and to hear from other experienced men who could help them navigate through shared obstacles. They also determined that - If it is not possible to establish the biological family connection - members of this “initiative” will discuss ways to connect “partnering relationships” between youth and Credible Messengers of many forms. DYRS applauds its Youth and Family Programs for its efforts in reaching our youth and their families in different, meaningful ways.



## POSITIVE STAFF DEVELOPMENT

### Advancing Youth Development

On September 12, the first group of DYRS staff participating in a series of four 30-hour Advancing Youth Development (AYD) training events graduated. The 30-hour Advancing Youth Development flagship training program is an interactive course that introduces youth workers to the principles and best practices of youth development. The AYD curriculum is composed of 30 hours delivered over four to five days and is recommended for youth-serving professionals with at least two years of paid experience working with youth 10-18 years old. Each session introduces participants to a youth development “concept” and facilitates shared learning of the practical applications of each concept. DYRS congratulates the first cohort of graduates and looks forward to watching them implement this approach to explore, share, and learn new strategies for working with young people.

### And the Title Goes to...

New Beginnings Youth Development Center (NBYDC) staff working in the “Sankofa” and “Phoenix” units for Title 16 youth attended an off-grounds team-building activity at The Big Escape Rooms in Silver Spring, Maryland to build comradery and learn to work as a team. The group consisted of NBYDC Deputy Superintendent Janay Williams, and more than 20 newly assigned staffers made up of Youth Development Representatives (YDRs), and Restorative Justice, Treatment, and Mental Health staff. All participants had to separate into three teams. Each team found themselves locked in a themed room requiring them to use a variety of clues to find their way out before the one-hour clock expired. As they learned to collaborate, they assessed their individual skills, styles and techniques. The day culminated with a discussion on best practices on how to work with each other, and how to depend on each other’s strengths in challenging situations. The day ended up being beneficial in many ways, and the team would like to thank DYRS Senior Deputy Director Linda Harllee Harper for the opportunity.



## Talk of the Town - “Why We’re Here”

*Words gleaned from DYRS Director Clinton Lacey during an agency town hall on September 11.*

“The question we all need to ask ourselves is: why are we here?” said DYRS Director Clinton Lacey at the first of two agency town halls that took place on September 11 and September 13. “To engage and uplift our youth. To let them know that they deserve to have a future. To support them and their families. That is why we are doing so much within the community. What we do here is critical, but it is part of a big picture that involves Credible Messenger, our Achievement Centers, families, and the community. Don’t become distracted about what the mission is. When you hear our youths’ mothers and grandmother testifying in front of the <DC> Council on how they have been positively impacted by our work, we need to use that to grow and motivate ourselves to do even better. Don’t allow toxic people to instill negativity in your daily work. We think that we can collectively run an agency with love. We have communities at war with each other. We see our kids falling on the streets. We are asking our youth to put the guns down. We can’t pass the message to certain youth that we are scared to accept this challenge. We don’t fear it. We have to embrace all our youth and let them know that we love them, and that we are here to support the change.”

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