
DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

DJJ helps lead the way as director assists with local anti-gang efforts

As a part of the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) gang-awareness and community prevention efforts, DJJ employees are assisting in local communities with anti-gang initiatives. DJJ Director Bill Byars is among those working with groups in his own local community to help combat this problem. Director Byars, a Camden native, is assisting the Kershaw County Gang Awareness Task Force, a group dedicated to developing after-school programs for youth and taking other proactive measures to keep young people out of gangs. He is also encouraging DJJ employees around the state to go into their home communities and assist with efforts to intervene with young people before they choose the wrong path and end up in the juvenile justice system.

DJJ has already implemented measures designed to target at-risk youth and gangs. DJJ currently co-sponsors 24 Teen After-School Centers (TASCs) throughout the state, has begun an intensive supervision program for at-risk juveniles leaving DJJ facilities, and sponsors speaking and tour programs for youth in local communities. According to a recent DJJ survey, at least 15% of juveniles entering the DJJ system are, or have once been, affiliated with a gang.

DJJ Wellness and Training Center

In an effort to create a more physically fit and healthier staff, DJJ last year opened an employee Wellness and Training Center in a vacant building on its Training Complex. The center was opened to raise awareness of the importance of exercise and healthier lifestyle, which equates to a stronger workforce.

With that in mind, we are proud to announce that employee Marcie Calvert, a teacher at our Willow Lane School for girls, is among the first success stories. In her quest to lose weight and become physically fit, Marcie has been working out at the Wellness and Training Center while following a strict eating regiment. She has lost more than 200 pounds and is still losing.

Marcie is now motivating others to make the same lifestyle choices for their own personal and professional reasons, and she credits the Wellness and Training Center with being a great resource.

Miss Willow Lane Pageant

As part of the "community behind the fence" concept for youth in its custody, DJJ recently held the second annual Miss Willow Lane Pageant. The pageant was not focused on beauty or talent; instead it was designed to help young women deal with the issues of low self-esteem and making good decisions.

While the pageant was held "behind the fence" it could not have been a success without the help of the community outside the fence. DJJ Social Worker Leigh Hicks, who organized the event, appealed to staff and the community for donations of gowns and shoes for the formal event. Her appeal brought in donations of 70 gowns and shoes – many of them from people in the community who learned of the event through DJJ staff, and simply wanted to help.

On Saturday, February 2, nine young women dressed in borrowed gowns and sparkling shoes from people they did not know, but who cared enough to contribute to the cause of helping young women who have made poor choices in their lives.

Schedule

- February 29 Speak at Darlington County Forum
 Coker College, Hartsville

- March 10 Provide Opening at Volunteers for Youth Conference
 Midlands Technical College, Airport Campus

- March 17 *U Need to Know* Radio Show
 WOIC Radio