

# July EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



# ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

*To connect with youth involved in the justice system and to change the trajectory of their lives.*

*August 2023 Newsletter*

## AUTAUGA CAMPUS Security Team

Officers Pierce, Debose,  
Sawyer, Barnes, Whitlow,  
Patterson (not pictured  
- Officers Webster,  
Singleton, and Artis)



## VACCA CAMPUS Mr. Curtis Pierce



## MT. MEIGS CAMPUS Ms. Kelsey Peterson



## FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greeting DYS Employees,

I hope each of you can take a few minutes to read over the August DYS Newsletter. There are several articles that celebrate accomplishments, special guests, and leadership qualities we should all aspire to achieve. We continue to be challenged by hiring and retaining our direct care workforce in sufficient numbers where we can operate at capacity. This is critical because youth are waiting too long to come into services at our facilities and contracted placements.

There are a number of factors that should be addressed if we are to be successful with onboarding and retaining facility staff responsible for supervision of our students. The first factor is to maintain a compensation package that is competitive in today's work market. The second is equally if not more important and that is encouraging leadership at all levels to develop and support our staff. Unfortunately, we still have room for improvement when it comes to the daily supervision, support, and development of our staff, especially during their probation period. We have heard for a long time from employees that separate from DYS that it is the relationships with their co-workers, and not the youth, that cause the stress in their jobs! We are committed to addressing both of these in the coming months.

DYS received approval from the State Personnel Department to increase the In-Hire rate for direct care staff effective August 1st. That means that direct care employees below the new in-hire rate will move to the new rate. DYS was also approved to implement a compression scale increase for staff who provide direct care supervision and security on our campuses. This means you may be eligible for up to a 3 step increase if you are not topped out in your classification. If you are topped out, you will still receive the 2% COLA on October 1st. We are hopeful that this increase in salary, along with a commitment to provide quality supervision as an expectation of leadership, will restore our employee numbers to meet the needed capacity.

I encourage everyone in the department to not only read the insights from the leadership article but to select one item and commit to improving this quality in your professional relationships with one another.

In appreciation,

Steve P. Lafreniere

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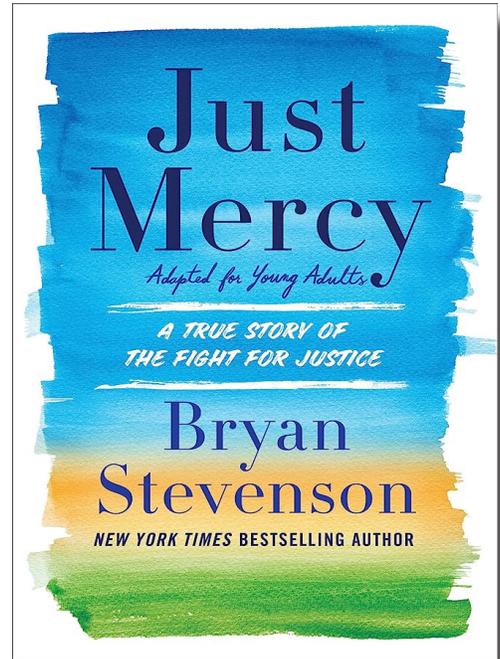
**MISSION:** To be a life changing resource for youth involved in the justice system by providing quality educational opportunities, services, and supports to reduce reoffending, improve positive outcomes, strengthen families, and enhance community safety.

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## The Autauga Campus Welcomes Mr. Bryan Stevenson!

On Tuesday, July 11th, the Autauga Campus welcomed Mr. Bryan Stevenson for a special visit and presentation. Mr. Stevenson is the author of the New York Times bestseller, Just Mercy - A True Story of the Fight for Justice. Mr. Stevenson is an acclaimed lawyer and social justice advocate who, through his book, offers a glimpse into the lives of the wrongfully imprisoned and his efforts to fight for their freedom.

Prior to the event, youth were able to read the book, watch the movie, and learn about the life and work of Mr. Stevenson. During the event at the Autauga Campus, Mr. Stevenson spoke to the youth and the staff and offered encouragement and hope. Mr. Stevenson held a question and answer session and spoke about family and early life, his clients and the work he does including juvenile reform, and why he decided to write his book. It was a wonderful experience for the youth and staff!





## Wallace School hosts Graduation Ceremony

On Friday, July 14th, Wallace School on the Mt. Meigs Campus held a graduation ceremony for our students who completed their high school diploma or GED. The graduation included students, faculty, campus and central office staff, and family members. The graduation began with the Pledge of Allegiance, invocation, and welcoming remarks. The guest speaker for the graduation ceremony was Mr. Oronde Mitchell, who spoke of overcoming obstacles and creating your own destiny. Following Mr. Mitchell's remarks, there was a recognition of the students who are currently enrolled in college courses. Student D.B. was recognized for his recent scholarship. The conclusion to the graduation was a presentation of diplomas and final remarks with a recessional. A reception for the graduates and their family members was held in Wallace School.



## Mt. Meigs Host the Boys Club Completion Ceremony

On Thursday, July 13th, the Mt. Meigs Campus celebrated students who completed the Boys Club Character Values and Leadership Module. Seventeen students participated in the completion ceremony. The students spoke about leadership and what it means to be a leader. The ceremony included an introduction of students, student speakers, a student performance, presentation of certificates, recitation of the mission statement, and closing remarks. Congratulations to all of the students who completed this module!



## DYS Campuses Host Fourth of July Festivities



During the week of July 3rd, the DYS Campuses held Fourth of July events for the staff and youth. Each campus provided activities for the youth and food for both youth and staff. It was a fun week to celebrate!

### Autauga Campus



### Mt. Meigs Campus

Special thanks to Officer Howard, Officer Holmes, Ms. Underwood, and Ms. Moore for donating the funds for the Mt. Meigs staff's special lunch!



### Vacca Campus





## Insight from Leadership First

Leadership First publishes inspirational leadership quotes and articles from the best leadership minds in the world. It is an organization “dedicated to helping every leader create an excellent organization and to provide a daily cup of inspiration for all leaders.”

<http://www.leadershipfirst.net>

### **No one can be a great leader unless they genuinely care about the success of everyone on their team.**

How can you build a relationship with your team? Here are some examples from Outreach Magazine:

1. **Treat people with respect** - To communicate and demonstrate value to another human being is a great honor paid to them.
2. **Express appreciation** - It takes a couple of seconds to say thank you and less than a minute to express sincere appreciation.
3. **Encourage often and generously** - You can't encourage people too much.
4. **Look for the best in every person** - If you look for the best in every person, you will find it.
5. **Practice kindness naturally** - Kindness is a commonly overlooked essential in leadership.
6. **Listen well** - Listening communicates value, respect and love.
7. **Own your mistakes** - People do not respect and eventually stop following leaders who don't own and take responsibility for their mistakes.
8. **Genuinely care about people** - “People don't care how much you know till they know how much you care.”  
—John Maxwell

When you show your team that you **GENUINELY** care about them professionally and personally, people will be more open to you as a person and as their leader, they will go over and beyond the call of duty to help their leader and, by extension, their organization achieves its goals and purpose.

A leader's ability to make everyone feel important is the key to building and maintaining a successful relationship with your team.

LEADERSHIP FIRST

**You are a true leader when you help your team become successful. Remember leadership is not about you, it's all about the people you serve.**

Leadership First



## CONNECT & REDIRECT

### Our Values.....

#### **Safety & Accountability**

We believe a safe environment is everyone's responsibility and is foundational for individual and programmatic success.

#### **Character & Integrity**

We believe the behavior we desire in others should first be seen through our own actions.

#### **Communication & Collaboration**

We share ideas freely and courageously. We embrace the potential of new ideas and approaches.

#### **Respect & Connection**

We believe youth and staff become meaningfully engaged through respectful relationships that are consistent, compassionate, and fair.

#### **Empowerment & Discovery**

We create opportunities for others to learn, engage, and transform.

#### **Equity & Inclusion**

We embrace our diversity, believing it transforms us and our community.

#### **Transparency & Excellence**

We are committed to being informed by data to improve the quality of our efforts and accountability to our stakeholders.

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