

June 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.

AUTAUGA CAMPUS

Mr. Lindsey Roux



VACCA CAMPUS

Mr. Ladale Oatis

**Picture Not
Available**

MT. MEIGS CAMPUS

Not Available

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

July 2023 Newsletter

Greeting DYS Employees,

It's official, Summer is here and it promises to be as hectic as it is hot! I want to update the staff on a few things that can be anticipated as we go through the summer and into next fiscal year. The Alabama Legislature completed their session last month and DYS staff and teachers can expect a COLA increase of 2% beginning October 1st. I know we all appreciate a little extra after the inflation rate we had last year.

I wanted to thank Senator Madison-Coleman (DYS Board member) for her sponsorship of Senate Bill 120 helping DYS deal with contraband more effectively in the future. The new law will allow DYS to determine in policy what constitutes contraband and if necessary, prosecute those caught supplying it to youth on our campuses. We feel this deterrent is needed to combat the recent increase in contraband that is getting onto our facilities.

For over a year, we have been dealing with staff shortages that affect our ability to bring youth into DYS and supervise them safely. This has also affected our contract providers as well. Consequently, the list of youth waiting to get into DYS has grown in 2023. This is a serious issue and DYS has taken several measures to try and address it over the last 18 months. I hope to be able to announce some additional steps we will take in the next month or two to alleviate this issue. Sometimes word-of-mouth is the best advertising so if you know someone looking for a job or career change, either full or part-time, encourage them to apply to DYS.

We recently met with Performance-based Standards (PbS) leadership and reviewed the campus' Facility Improvement Plans (FIP). We are working to integrate these plans (6-month improvement plans) with overarching strategic plan priorities and goals. This will allow the department and facilities to focus our efforts on strategies that compliment efforts and do not compete for resources.

I encourage you to take a look at the latest DYS Annual Report for 2022. It is a great way to review what DYS was able to accomplish last year as well as learn more about the different areas of the department. You can find it on our DYS website, www.DYS.alabama.gov and click on Annual Reports at the bottom.

In appreciation for all that you do,

Steven Lafreniere

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.



Mt. Meigs Student Wins National Scholarship!

Congratulations to Student D.B.!!!

In June, Mt. Meigs student D.B. was selected to receive the PbS Education and Employment Foundation J. Russell "Russ" Jennings Scholarship Award. This award is only given to two youth in the entire country. The scholarship is in the amount of \$15,000 and provides support for a young person from start to finish of a two-year educational or vocational program or certification.

The scholarship was established in honor of J. Russell "Russ" Jennings to support post-secondary and vocational technical education opportunities for young people with lived experience in the juvenile justice system. The awards are designed to ensure young people have the resources they need to start and finish a two-year educational or vocational program. Russ Jennings committed his professional career to helping those he worked with to live up to their highest potential. His work with young people in juvenile justice facilities and programs spanned more than 40 years until he passed in 2021. Thanks to Russ' generosity, the generosity of his family and friends who donated in his memory and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this scholarship is now available. This will be the 2nd year for this scholarship to be awarded.

Our student, D.B., described his plan for his education and detailed his current accomplishments as well as future goals and aspirations. D.B. will be pursuing two additional years of education in order to complete his bachelor's degree. D.B.'s application was judged based on the quality of the essay, the thoughtfulness of the Program Completion Plan, the demonstrated commitment to completing the educational or vocational program and launching his career, and how well he exemplified Russ' kindness, humor, and belief in setting high goals and doing his very best to achieve them.



- Winners of this scholarship are expected to maintain an average or better than average grade and check in at least twice a month with the PbS mentor, a young person who was incarcerated. The mentor will be available as much as needed to offer tips, tools, connections to resources, and supports needed to ensure completion of the educational or vocational program.
- The funds are to be used for tuition, books and materials but may be used for other related expenses needed to ensure the program completion. Any unused funds at the end of two years will be given to the scholarship winner.

Former Mt. Meigs Student's Success is Highlighted On WSFA News

On June 19th, WSFA highlighted the Hope Inspired Ministries Program along with a former Mt. Meigs student who has completed boot camp for the United States Marine Corp! The complete article from WSFA is below.



MONTGOMERY, Ala. (WSFA) - An idea and a servant-minded mission called Hope Inspired Ministries was founded in Montgomery in 2012. Since then, their programs to prepare and equip marginalized individuals have multiplied throughout the state and transformed lives. The curriculum is structured around accountability, compassion, and equipping individuals for success. The goal is to help people to become self-supporting and productive.

"Juvenile justice is about second chances and getting individuals ready to move on with their life maybe after having a challenging time," said Executive Director of the Department of Youth Services Steven Lafreniere. It's an 8-week program Hope Inspired Ministries administers with partners who have like-minded goals to look to the future and to keep the past in the past.

"It's a challenging time life for young people sometimes, and yes, because of the life circumstances and backgrounds that they have had, reaching out and connecting with young people can be challenging," said Lafreniere.

Recent graduate Daveyun Stinson is the epitome of what HIM is all about.

When Stinson joined the program, organizers say he was the quietest person in the room. Now he has blossomed into a leader and recently completed boot camp with the United States Marine Corps. "To see him coming here with a Marine shirt on and every plan that he said he was going to do and acting on it just to be a part of this just so monumental," said Brandon Cleggs-Burns, Site Director of HIM.

"My little nephew used to come and see me every day telling me he wants to be just like me, but before I went to DYS, he would tell me that, and I would tell him to stop saying that. Now, I actually see why he's saying that, and he still, to this day tells me he wants to be like me," said Stinson.

Due to strict structure and accountability, only about half of the students who enroll complete the course. However, those who graduate have a near 90% success rate in finding employment.

The Autauga and Vacca Campuses Celebrate Juneteenth!

Autauga Campus

Autauga participated in Juneteenth activities on June 16, 2023. The campus provided an educational component where the students shared history, poems, and spoken word. They received a lunch of fried chicken, mac n cheese, green beans, potato salad, and squash casserole. The drinks were water, Kool aide, and sweet tea. During the afternoon we participated in indoor and outdoor activities including making tie-dye t-shirts.



Vacca Campus- McNeel School

The students and staff at McNeel School Vacca Campus engaged in a one-of-a-kind Juneteenth Freedom Celebration on June 22, 2023 in the Chapel at Vacca Campus. The theme was "How does it feel to be Free?" The students displayed their Juneteenth Art, read poetry, and participated in a skit to emphasize the point that they too are Free and may not be aware of it. There was a Juneteenth feast provided to the entire campus following the program and the students enjoyed cooperative activities when they returned to the school building. Special thanks to Dr. Wright, Ms. Bailey, and Mrs. Fulghum, and especially the McNeel students who worked hard to put on a great celebration of Freedom.





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.
