

August 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.

September 2023 Newsletter

AUTAUGA CAMPUS

Ms. Julia Buxton, LPN



VACCA CAMPUS

Ms. Traci Pike

**Picture
Not
Available**

MT. MEIGS CAMPUS

**Not
Available**

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Greeting DYS Employees,

I hope everyone was able to enjoy some time with family and friends and good food at some point over the Labor Day Weekend. Established to recognize the contributions of American workers, it is also the unofficial end to the summer. I know the whole nation is ready to say goodbye to the "Dome of Heat" that we have all dealt with the last few weeks.

For state departments like DYS, September also signals the winding down of the fiscal year and the beginning of the new school year. A new year can bring a degree of hope and optimism that things can be better than the previous year. A 2% COLA increase beginning October 1st should help all of us start the year a little more optimistically.

In order to have greater success with our internal and external challenges in FY24, we will need to change our approach and some practices. Our ability to get youth into DYS remains our #1 priority this year and we will all need to be on the same page to have an impact. My thanks to the Institutional Services staff and our maintenance crew who have been working hard to prepare dorms for the increase of students at Mt. Meigs. As of October 1st, we will have additional contracted beds in the community that should lower the number of youth waiting for placement.

I have also restructured some areas within the executive staff and hired Mr. Anthony Wynn as the DYS Director of Special Operations. Mr. Wynn joins DYS with 30 years of juvenile justice experience most of which has been responsibility for facilities and residential services. Special Operations are those Offices that cut across service divisions such as: Screening and Placement; Training; and Special Investigations. Please help him feel welcome when you meet him.

Congratulations to our fellow employees who were able to retire this past summer. Thank you for all your efforts and dedication to Connecting and Redirecting youth to a brighter future.

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.

DYS Welcomes Mr. Anthony Wynn as the New Director of Special Operations

Mr. Anthony W. Wynn (DYS Director of Special Operations) joined our team on August 1st, 2023. Mr. Wynn joins us having 35 years of experience working in juvenile justice agencies from facility level management to senior level leadership positions. Originally from Alabama, Mr. Wynn has worked in the juvenile justice systems in New York, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and most recently in Maryland. Mr. Wynn will be responsible for Screening and Placement, Special Investigations, Liaison with the Training Department, and any special projects that the Executive Director assigns to him.



Mr. Wynn started his career as an entry level staff, which he has a lot of respect for, because he feels that they are some of the most valuable staff in our agency. According to Mr. Wynn, "They spend the most time with our youth, and they also get to hear the youth's good, bad, and ugly before anyone else." He believes that their impact is simply invaluable to our agency. His service to our youth led him from an entry level position to an Executive. Mr. Wynn has worked with youth in secure facilities, limited secure, community-based and non-community based programming, which included boys and girls. Mr. Wynn has a successful track record of working with youth in the past, and we are sure that he will bring that same passion to DHS. We believe that you will find that his blend of experience, dedication to serving youth, and his passion for young people will be a good fit for DHS.

Please join us in welcoming Mr. Wynn aboard and don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions for him, he has an open-door policy!

DYS Welcomes Our New Student Intern from Auburn University of Montgomery (AUM), Ms. Amber Watson



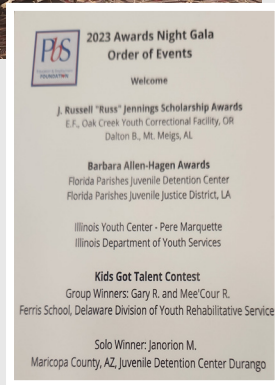
On Monday, August 21st, DHS welcomed our new intern, Ms. Amber Watson. Ms. Watson is currently working toward her Bachelors of Social Work degree at AUM. Ms. Watson also holds a Bachelors Degree in Criminal Justice from AUM. She states that she would like to use her education to make a difference in the lives of our juveniles. Ms. Watson states, "I want to enrich and empower our young ones with the tools and confidence needed to be able to overcome obstacles, stigma, and prejudices that are presented to them." We are very excited to have Ms. Watson on board and we hope that you will join us in welcoming her to our agency.

The DHS Internship experience provides interns with a wide variety of opportunities to learn various aspects of the department. This includes the DHS School District, the Division of Community Services, the Division of Institutional Services, Training, Quality Assurance, and Advocacy. Starting September 26th, DHS will welcome an additional intern who is currently working toward her Master's degree in Social Work from the University of Alabama.

Student D.B. from Mt. Meigs Campus Honored at the National PbS Awards Banquet



On Friday, August 10th, PbS honored student D.B. from the Mt. Meigs Campus for receiving one of the two national Russ Jennings Scholarships. PbS played a special video thank you from D.B. for the audience.



The Vacca Campus Receives \$10,000 from the Jefferson County Community Service Fund



On August 10th, Senator Linda Coleman-Madison visited the Vacca Campus to present a \$10,000 donation from the Jefferson County Community Service Fund. DYS greatly appreciates this generous donation, which will help fund additional programs and services for our youth. DYS is thankful to have caring and supportive community partners. DYS is also grateful for the continued support of Senator Linda Coleman-Madison as a member of the DYS Board of Directors and her efforts to support our agency and its mission.

DYS Participates in Congresswoman Sewell's Annual Job Fair



On August 2nd, DYS participated in Congresswoman Sewell's Annual Job Fair in Montgomery, AL. The job fair was held at the Multiplex at Crampton Bowl. DYS staff spent time speaking with those interested in learning more about our agency and the career options available. DYS received over 80 interested individuals who signed up to receive more information. We would like to give special thanks to all who came out to assist with this event and spend time speaking to potential applicants.



LaShondra Hinton
Connie Rich
Marique Ruffin
Eric Evans
Melanie Moore
Antonio Howard
Bridget McDonald
Corey Sledge
Machea Jones
Meloday Nelson
Shannon Weston



Wallace School hosts 2nd Graduation Ceremony for Summer 2023



On Friday, August 11th, Wallace School on the Mt. Meigs Campus hosted its 2nd graduation ceremony for students receiving their high school diploma or GED. There were three high school graduates and two GED completions. The students were able to hear from Judge Zachary Collins, who was the guest speaker for the ceremony. (pictures have been blurred to protect identity)



Congratulations to all of our graduates!

Mt. Meigs Celebrates Student Graduation from the Hope Inspired Ministries Program.

On Friday, August 4th, the Mt. Meigs Campus celebrated student graduation from the Hope Inspired Ministries Program. Four students participated in the ceremony. Guest speakers included Mr. Paul Scott, Mentor for HIM Montgomery and DYS, and Ms. Angelica Willis, Site Director for the HIM Montgomery Campus. Both provided encouragement and prayer for the graduates.



DYS Executive Director, Steve Lafreniere, Speaks at the National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice (NABCJ)

On Monday, July 17th, DYS Executive Director, Steve Lafreniere, provided opening remarks for the National Association of Blacks In Criminal Justice (NABCJ) Annual Conference, which was held in Birmingham, AL. The NABCJ “seeks to focus attention on relevant legislation, law enforcement, prosecution, and defense-related needs and practices, with emphasis on law enforcement, courts, corrections, and the prevention of crime. Among its chief concerns is the general welfare of and to increase influence of African Americans and people of color as it relates to the administration of justice. NABCJ is designed to serve the needs of African Americans and people of color at all levels, including nonprofessionals, paraprofessionals, and professionals. Anyone can become a member of the Association and support a commitment to equal justice for all.” The conference theme for this year was titled, “Remembering Our Past, Embracing Our Present, Envisioning Our Future.”



DYS Executive Director and Executive Staff Attend the Capital City Rotary Club Meeting

Steve Lafreniere, Executive Director of DYS, along with the DYS Executive Staff attended the Capital City Rotary Club Meeting on Thursday, August 17th. Mr. Stanley Presley, who is a member of the Rotary Club and also serves as Program Director for the Boys and Girls Club on the Mt. Meigs Campus, invited DYS to present to the Rotary Club members. Mr. Lafreniere provided an overview of DYS and answered questions following his presentation. The Rotary Club made a generous donation in DYS' name to the Valiant Cross Academy. The Valiant Cross Academy “provides a loving, stable educational opportunity for young men in Montgomery, Alabama. We believe in developing leaders. Teaching each one of our scholars the necessary skills to become productive citizens, leaders in the community and honorable men.” DYS is thankful for the opportunity to speak to community leaders and we welcome additional opportunities in the future.





Insight from Leadership First - NEW Article

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.” DYS will be sharing leadership information throughout the year. <http://www.leadershipfirst.net>

Being a Leader Requires Humility and Acknowledgement of Good Work

HUMILITY

- Humility is not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less. - C.S Lewis
- At the heart of humility is a desire to serve and a dedication to helping others become great. Many leaders seem to forget that leading others more than anything else should be held in reverence. Being the leader means that you have been placed in a position to serve others.
- Too often, I have seen leaders duck and cover, throw their people under the bus, throw their positional weight around, and instead of leading from a place of service, lead from a place of ego when things get rough.
- Never confuse humility with weakness; as a matter of fact, it takes great strength of will and character to put the needs of others before your own. To admit your mistakes, to be vulnerable, transparent, and fallible in front of your team.
- Humble leaders exhibit behaviors that lift their team’s spirits, self-esteem, and confidence to achieve anything imaginable.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

- When an employee’s performance is consistently good, it becomes expected and may unknowingly be taken for granted.
- I have seen people in leadership positions manipulate high-performing employees to produce more, and take on the burden of others. Yet, at the same time, nothing is done to address the significant shortfall in the performance of other team members. At some point, this person will get burned out and lose all inspiration to continue performing at such a high level.
- According to Tim McClure, when passionate employees become quiet, it usually signals that the work environment has become very dysfunctional. As a leader, this is something you must observe and act on immediately. Please don’t push your most loyal people to the point that they no longer care. When you have people passionate, inspired, and motivated to help the company achieve its vision while fulfilling its purpose, you must do everything in your power to ensure that this team keeps this vibe. Otherwise, you run the risk of pushing away great talent while settling for mediocrity.

Check out their new Amazon Best Seller, “Unlock The Hidden Leader, Become The Leader You Were Destined To Be,” by going to the link <https://geni.us/4JmlQU>.



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.
