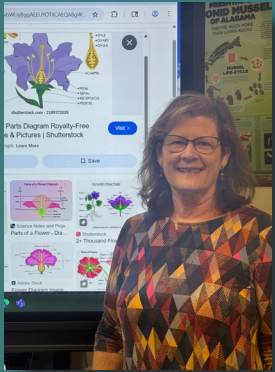


## June EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

### AUTAUGA CAMPUS Ms. Karen Russell



### VACCA CAMPUS Ms. Natasha Rembert



## ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

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

### FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*July 2025 Newsletter*

Dear DYS Employees,

As educators and mentors, you play a pivotal role in shaping the futures of the youth in our custody and care. One of our core missions is to equip our students with the tools they need to succeed beyond our care, and a critical component of this mission is fostering the development of essential workforce skills.

Many of the youth we serve face unique challenges, but they also possess incredible potential. By providing opportunities to develop practical, in-demand skills, we empower them to build confidence, discover purpose, and prepare for meaningful careers. Workforce skills—such as problem-solving, teamwork, communication, and technical proficiencies—open doors to economic independence and help break the cycle of recidivism. Research shows that youth who engage in career-focused programs are more likely to secure stable employment and reintegrate successfully into their communities.

At our Mt. Meigs Campus, initiatives like the Hope Inspired Ministry (HIM), Be Pro Be Proud Bus Tour, and the IN2WORK program, exemplify how hands-on and immersive experiences can spark interest in skilled trades and other professions. These opportunities allow students to develop their soft-skills and explore diverse career paths, from construction and manufacturing to technology and healthcare, in an engaging and supportive environment. Although students at our Vacca and Autauga campuses may be younger or with us for a shorter commitment, we still have an opportunity to work on the skills important for their first job and explore and encourage career interests. Your role in guiding students through these experiences, encouraging their curiosity, and reinforcing the value of hard work is invaluable.

I urge each of you to continue integrating workforce readiness into your interactions with our students. Whether through classroom discussions, informal conversations, career counseling, or facilitating access to programs like Be Pro Be Proud, your efforts help our youth see themselves as capable professionals with bright futures. Together, we can instill a sense of pride and possibility, equipping them with the skills to thrive in the workforce and contribute positively to society.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to our students' growth and success. If you have ideas for additional workforce development opportunities or ways to enhance our programs, please share them with your supervisors or contact me directly.

In Appreciation,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Steve Lafreniere'.

Steve 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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## DYS School District 210 Hosts the Be Pro Be Proud (BPBP) Bus Tour at L. B. Wallace School on the Mt. Meigs Campus

On Thursday, June 12, and Friday, June 13, the DYS School District 210 proudly hosted the Be Pro Be Proud (BPBP) Bus Tour at L. B. Wallace School. Spearheaded by the Alabama State Department of Education, the Be Pro Be Proud Alabama is a dynamic initiative dedicated to inspiring a new generation of skilled professionals while fostering pride and progress in Alabama's workforce. The highlight of the initiative is the BPBP mobile workshop, an innovative platform featuring interactive modules, hands-on activities, and virtual reality experiences that allow students to explore a variety of skilled trades and career opportunities.

Students engaged with the BPBP mobile workshop through scheduled rotations during the school day on June 12th and 13th. We warmly invite you to visit and experience this exciting initiative firsthand! To learn more about the BPBP mobile workshop, check out the short video below.

Welcome to Be Pro Be Proud: [https://youtu.be/m\\_275ulkB94](https://youtu.be/m_275ulkB94)





### Mt. Meigs Campus Hosts IN2WORK Graduation



### Congratulations to Our New Hires! New Employee Orientation Class for June 2025



**Kierra Bell** - Vacca Campus  
**Aaron Brown** - Mt. Meigs Campus  
**Jamal Long** - Autauga Campus  
**Eloise Merritt** - Vacca Campus  
**Bianca Reed** - Mt. Meigs Campus  
**Anissia Shepherd** - Mt. Meigs Campus  
**Ross Starks** - Vacca Campus  
**Jakeylon Vason** - Mt. Meigs Campus

### Staff Give Thanks to Ms. Shanta Vaughn

During the month of June, the Autauga Campus Armark staff celebrated Ms. Shanta Vaughn for being an excellent supervisor. Ms. Vaughn currently supervises all three DYS sites. Ms. Vaughn teaches the IN2Work class at the Mt. Meigs campus. When we think of leadership, we often think of titles or authority. But true leadership is about integrity, consistency, and the ability to inspire. Ms. Vaughn exemplifies these qualities every single day.





### Autauga Campus Celebrates Juneteenth with Youth and Staff

The Autauga campus came alive with a vibrant three-day celebration of Juneteenth, highlighting community, history, and empowerment:

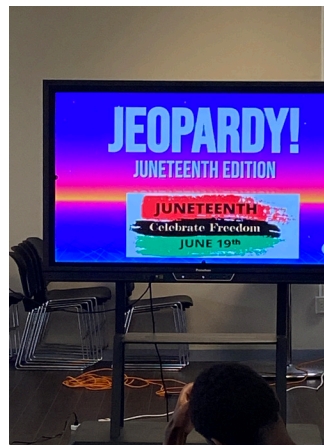
**June 18:** We kicked off the festivities with a Community Luncheon for staff and students. The afternoon was filled with meaningful conversations, shared stories, and a sense of unity.

**June 19 (Juneteenth):** The celebration continued with Movies and Popcorn Day. Students enjoyed films that celebrated the accomplishments and resilience of Black Americans throughout history.

**June 20:** The final day featured an inspiring address from Dr. Robert White of THE Alabama State University, whose words resonated deeply with all in attendance. The day concluded with an engaging round of Juneteenth Jeopardy, followed by a delicious feast of hotdogs and chili cheese fries, leaving everyone energized and connected.

Dr. Robert O. White II is a professor in the Humanities Department at ASU, teaching African American humanities and related courses for over 20 years, legal analyst, civil rights advocate, pastor, and community innovator. His interdisciplinary work spans education, religion, energy entrepreneurship, and social justice, making him a well-respected and influential figure at Alabama State University and beyond. He earned praise as “inspirational,” with many students commenting on his “amazing lectures” and feeling “inspired all the time”. Alongside his academic career, he serves as pastor of the Montgomery and Greenville City of Refuge churches, leading sermons, podcasts, and a blog.

Thank you to everyone who participated in making this Juneteenth celebration a memorable and meaningful experience!



### Congratulations to J. Walter Wood Rite of Passage (ROP) for Receiving a Passageway Scholarship Foundation Grant!

Congratulations to the J. Walter Wood Rite of Passage Program for receiving an \$18,000 grant to fund an onsite cosmetology education classroom! The grant was provided by the Passageway Scholarship Foundation. The foundation was started over twenty years ago by Rite of Passageway employees and supporters to raise funds for scholarships and educational opportunities for youth. The Youth Enrichment Grant program provides at risk youth with opportunities for educational enrichment. The grant provided to ROP will provide cosmetology instruction to 24 young women for approximately 4.5 months. The instruction will be in partnership with Transitions Technical College.





# TEAM WORK

## EMPLOYEE COUNCIL WELLNESS CHALLENGE

1



**Communicate to  
create cohesion and  
clear goals.**

2



**Organize team  
building to build  
camaraderie.**

3



**Actively  
participate in  
discussions and  
offer constructive  
feedback.**

4



**Be open to  
different  
perspectives and  
open to adjusting  
your approach  
based on  
feedback.**

5



**Actively share  
personal growth  
experiences and  
foster a culture of  
learning and  
collaboration.**

# 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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