



# 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 *October 2025 Newsletter*

Greetings DYS Employees,

October signals that we are in the middle of the college football season again! Consequently, I would like to use football to make another analogy to our mission as a department and the importance of our daily activities and responsibilities.

Let me start by reminding everyone of our first DYS Value Statement:

**Safety and Accountability - We believe that a safe environment is everyone's responsibility and is foundational for individual and programmatic success.**

You may have noticed this year at the college and pro level that more players are wearing the additional padding around their helmets to protect their brain and keep them safer. Equipment is very important to create the safest environment for athletes to compete in, but it is not the whole story. For a football player, safety begins months earlier in their nutrition, conditioning, perfecting their skills and technique, and practicing the learning the schemes and plays. All these contribute to the athlete being in the best position to not only be successful but to be safe from injury.

At DYS we have several items in our environment that help to keep the facility and staff safer. We have a fence, special rooms, locks, restraints, and security staff. These hardware and mechanical items, along with security staff, can make an environment safer, but it is not the whole story. Like football, campus safety begins much earlier and is the culmination of many smaller, maybe unnoticeable efforts. It starts with initial and on-going training and supervision. We need to be accountable to one another and our job responsibilities. We need to be actively engaged in our environments with youth so we can be proactive and not just reactive. If we see something we know is wrong, we need to say something. It is doing the same everyday things right that will lead to safer environments and successful employees.

I would remind each of us to remember this analogy as we move into this next year. There will be greater emphasis on the everyday "little things" that need to be done to ensure our individual and programmatic success.

Thank you for all that you do

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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## September EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

MT. MEIGS CAMPUS  
Ms. Winford Wright

Picture Not Available

AUTAUGA CAMPUS  
Ms. Patricia Patterson



VACCA CAMPUS  
Ms. Sentrice Johnson



## Congratulations to Ms. Marlaina Reed, DYS Employee of the Quarter!

The Vacca Campus Youth Services Aide Marlaina Reed was selected for DYS Employee of the Quarter. Ms. Reed was nominated by Youth Services Specialist Mr. James Thomas. Mr. Thomas stated, "Ms. Reed works well with the students who become out of control and can talk them down to baseline without using physical force. Ms. Reed's co-workers enjoy working with her because she will talk to them and help them to solve problems they may have on the job. She has changed shifts with staff so that they could be off and she works to cover shifts when a staff has called off. Ms. Reed is a great staff that all supervisors wish they could have, but I am the lucky one to have her work with me in Underwood Hall." Well done Ms. Reed! DYS appreciates all that you do to make a difference at the Vacca Campus!



**Pictured: Marlaina Reed, LaShondra Hinton, Steve Lafreniere, and Walter Alston.**

## Art Students Shine in Montgomery Museum of Fine Art's Annual Chalk Art Competition

During the month of September, students in Ms. Toney's art class at Wallace School had the exciting opportunity to participate remotely in the Montgomery Museum of Fine Art's annual Fall Festival Chalk Art Competition. The theme for 2025 was the Harlem Renaissance, celebrating the vibrant cultural movement of the early 20th century. Ms. Toney's students created two stunning chalk murals—one measuring 8'x 8' and another 10'x 8'—that re-imagined iconic paintings by renowned Harlem Renaissance artist Jacob Lawrence. Their work beautifully captured the spirit and storytelling of this important artistic era. We are proud of these young artists for their creativity and dedication in bringing history to life through their art.

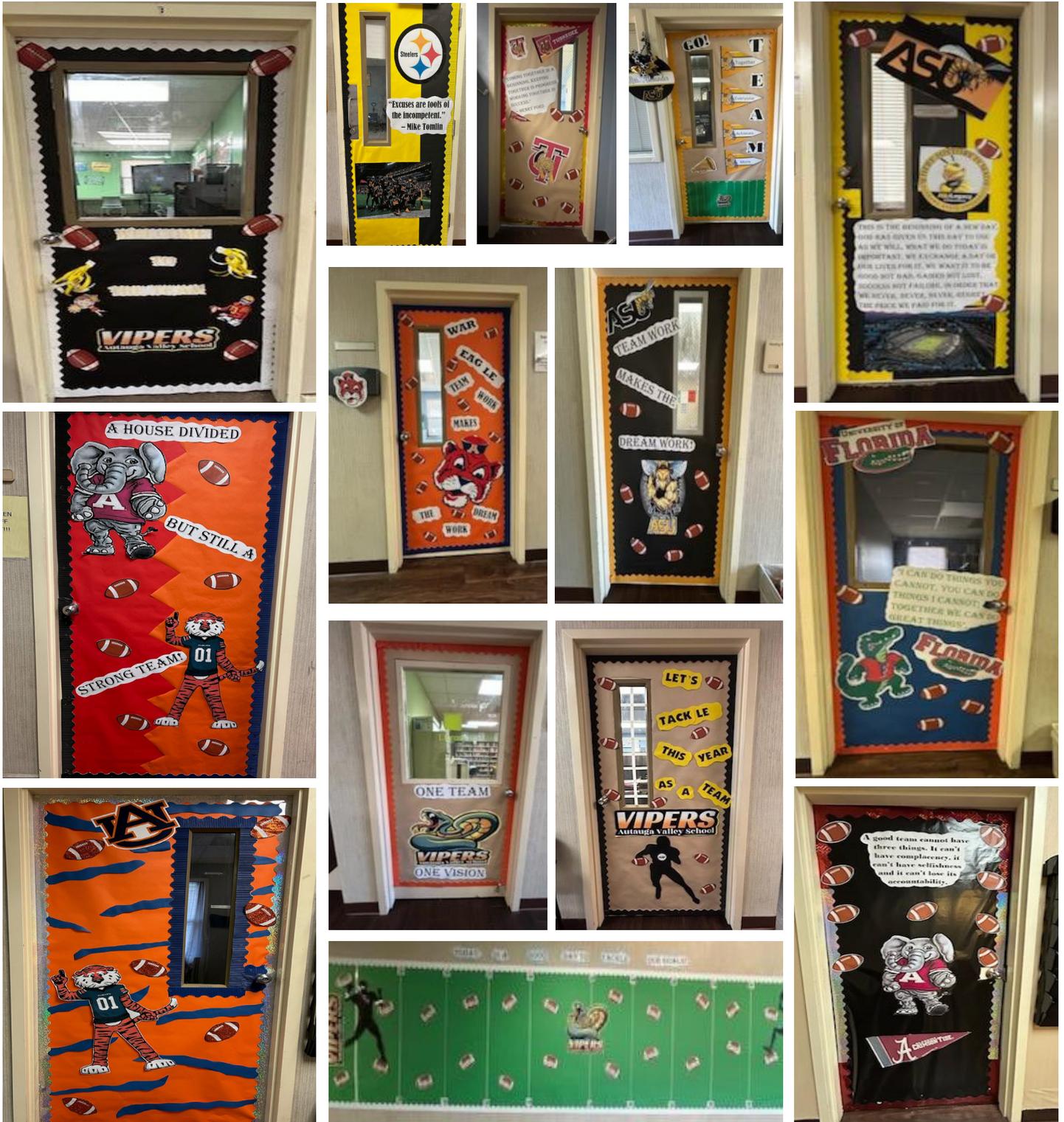


***We would like to extend our sincere thanks to the Montgomery Museum of Fine Art for providing this wonderful opportunity to our young men.***

# DYS Highlights

## Autauga Campus Teachers and Staff Kicked Off the School Year with Football Themed Motivation

The Autauga Campus kicked off their school year and has welcomed students, teachers, and staff to express excitement for the school year ahead. The beginning of a new school year is a time of excitement and possibility. The Autauga Campus teachers and staff are committed to providing a supportive environment for the student's academic and emotional development. The Autauga Campus values partnerships and looks forward to a successful year together. The school kick off theme was "Let's Score a Touchdown with Learning by Playing Hard and Studying Harder." Thank you to all the teachers and staff who participated in the school kick off!



## Stride Academy Recognizes the Autauga Campus School as a Top Performing School for CLAS SA-1



**Top-Performing Schools Last Month:  
Highest Questions Answered per Active Student (Grouped by Enrollment Size)**

<u>CLAS SA-I</u>	<u>CLAS SA-II</u>
1st - Berry High	1st - Avondale Elementary
2nd - Opp High	2nd - Hamilton High
3rd - Straughn Middle	3rd - Pike County Elementary
4th - Department of Youth Services	4th - Loachapoka High
5th - Meek Elementary	5th - Danville Middle

CLAS SA-III

1st - Hamilton Elementary
2nd - Arton School
3rd - Priceville Junior High
4th - Brookwood Elementary
5th - Valley Junior High

## Welcome New DYS Employees for September 2025

- D'Maia Cooper - Autauga Campus
- Christopher Davenport - Vacca Campus
- Orlando Frazier - Mt. Meigs Campus
- Cherrilyn Horn - Mt. Meigs Campus
- Zariah Napier - Mt. Meigs Campus
- Antonio Pruitt - Vacca Campus
- Braxton Rogers - Autauga Campus
- Tyler Whiting - Mt. Meigs Campus
- Lashonda Wyman - Mt. Meigs Campus



## Mt. Meigs Celebrates the Grand Opening of the Staff Development Building

The Mt. Meigs Campus recently celebrated the opening of its new Staff Development Building with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. In the front desk area, pictured below, staff are participating in a Q&A session to share details about themselves for display on the inquiry board. Meanwhile, new hires are enjoying the event space and break room. This inviting area provides a comfortable setting for staff to take breaks, enjoy meals, and engage in team-building incentives.



## Celebrating Milestones @ J. Walter Wood

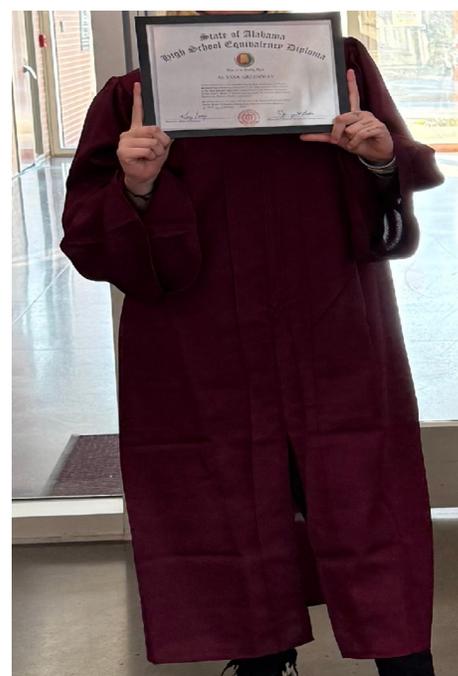
The Rite of Passage Bill of Rites states that youth are entitled to receive a comprehensive, year-round, accredited education, along with the opportunity to obtain industry-recognized vocational certifications.

With help from the Passageway Scholarship Foundation, the J. Walter Woods (JWWJ) residential treatment program is making life-changing career education even more accessible to our youth.

This year JWWJ received a grant from the Passageway Scholarship Foundation, enabling us to offer students the chance to learn a trade within the cosmetology industry. This program provides students with practical hands-on experience and the opportunity to earn credit hours prior to taking the licensure examination administered by the Alabama Board of Cosmetology.

We recently honored a student who successfully completed the program and received her high school diploma concurrently. This student participated in the natural hair program at JWW and worked diligently throughout her studies. She was awarded a \$13,000 scholarship from Transitions Technical College to complete the natural hair program and prepare for the licensure exam. It was a memorable occasion to host her graduation, with her family and probation officer in attendance to celebrate this significant achievement.

Thank you to the Passageway Scholarship Foundation for providing our students with the opportunity to engage in vocational activities and earn valuable certifications that can facilitate the advancement of their careers.



# EMPLOYEE COUNCIL WELLNESS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Symptoms of the most common breast cancers include:

- a breast lump or tissue thickening that feels different from surrounding tissue
- breast pain
- discolored and pitted skin on your breast
- a sudden, unexplained change in the shape of your breast
- a lump or swelling under your arm
- bloody discharge from your nipple

**"EVERY WOMAN NEEDS TO KNOW THE FACTS. AND THE FACT IS, WHEN IT COMES TO BREAST CANCER, EVERY WOMAN IS AT RISK." -  
DEBBIE WASSEMAN SCULTZ**



# 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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