



ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

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

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

Mt. Meigs Campus Hugh Simington



Vacca Campus Officer George Cowan



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

June 2026 Newsletter

Dear DYS Team,

Thank you for all that you do! This past month has been filled with remarkable accomplishments that reflect the hard work, dedication, and commitment of our outstanding staff and the impressive progress of our youth. Your collective efforts continue to create meaningful opportunities and positive outcomes across our campuses.

We proudly celebrated the Class of 2026 graduates at L.B. Wallace School on the Mt. Meigs Campus and Autauga Valley School on the Autauga Campus. These ceremonies honored the achievements of nine graduates from Wallace School as well as additional graduates and GED recipients at Autauga Valley. Mt. Meigs Campus also recognized four youth who completed the IN2WORK program and ten graduates from the Hope Inspired Ministries (H.I.M.) Program. Students further demonstrated their growth through the Alabama History Days research projects and hands-on participation in the Skills for Success Career Training Simulators, while the Autauga Campus hosted a valuable Annual Career Fair. These milestones highlight the tremendous hard work of our youth and the supportive guidance provided by our dedicated educators and staff.

Throughout May, we came together for meaningful staff appreciation events at the Central Office, School District, and all campuses, including special meals, wellness activities, and heartfelt recognitions. We also extend our sincere gratitude to the DYS Employee Council for organizing the Staff Appreciation Raffle and to all the winners who were recognized for their contributions.

As we reflect on these successes, we also want to recognize and honor Ms. Alesia Allen, Deputy Director of Institutional Services, who will be retiring at the end of June. Her many years of leadership and service have made a lasting impact on our agency, our staff, and the youth we serve. We are deeply grateful for her dedication and wish her all the best in her well-earned retirement.

Thank you for all that you do!

Sincerely,

Steve 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 HIGHLIGHTS

Class of 2026: DYS Celebrates Graduation

L.B. Wallace School (Mt. Meigs Campus) and the Autauga Valley School (Autauga Campus) celebrated their graduating classes on Tuesday, May 19, 2026, marking a significant milestone for students stepping into the next chapter of their lives. The L.B. Wallace School held its Graduation Ceremony at 9:30 a.m. at Mt. Meigs Chapel. The event featured a warm and inspiring program filled with pride and celebration for the Class of 2026. The program included a processional, pledge of allegiance, invocation by Pastor Owens, guest speaker Mr. Terry Roller, presentation of diplomas, and recessional. Nine youth graduated from Wallace School.



The Autauga Valley School Graduation Ceremony & GED Recognition was held later that afternoon at 2:00 p.m. at the Autauga Campus. The program highlighted both traditional graduates and those earning their GEDs. The program included a processional, pledge of allegiance, welcome and student address, guest speaker Dr. Eric Wright, presentation of diplomas, and recessional. Both of these ceremonies represent the hard work, dedication, and growth for the students, their families, and the dedicated educators at both schools. Congratulations to all the graduates of the Class of 2026!



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

DYS Hosts Employee Appreciation Events

Throughout the month of May, including the week of May 4th through May 8th, DYS Central Office, the School District, and Campuses held multiple events to celebrate our teachers and staff. Special thanks to Aramark for assisting with the Taco Tuesday for staff for lunch and Church of the Highlands for providing Jim-N-Nicks barbecue chicken sandwiches on Wednesday. Central Office also had two food vendors, Fire Meets Wood and Hot-N-Fresh, come and offer lunch options for purchase.

The Autauga Campus held multiple events for staff including serving sweet treats, a Wellness Wednesday event, a Think and Paint event on Thursday, and a fun switcheroo day where staff dress up as other staff for the day on Friday. A staff luncheon and appreciation event was also held on Wednesday, May 27th.

The School District held events throughout the week of May 4th. Each school was served refreshments that included a coffee/energy drink bar. Desserts and snacks were also served to teachers. AEA also provided lunch, a treat cart, and donuts for the teachers.

The Vacca Campus held their staff appreciation event on Wednesday, May 20th. The staff and students celebrated with a game day and an awards presentation. The staff and students were then served a lunch of hamburgers, hot dogs, baked beans, and chips provided by Aramark. The staff received goody bags provided by Church of the Highlands.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

Mt. Meigs Campus Celebrates IN2WORK and Hope Inspired Ministries (H.I.M) Graduation

IN2WORK

As part of the IN2WORK program, four youth graduated on May 15th. The program featured a welcome by Ms. Stafford, opening remarks by Ms. Vaughn, and an introduction of the guest speaker by Ms. Elizabeth Bryant of Church of the Highlands. Pastor Randy Walker delivered the guest speaker remarks. Ms. Vaughn and Ms. Stafford then presented certificates to the graduates. A reception followed the ceremony, giving the youth an opportunity to spend quality time with their family members who attended the event.



Hope Inspired Ministries

On May 21st, the H.I.M Program celebrated graduation for ten graduates. The program opened with a welcome and opening prayer by Mr. John Bowman. Ms. Ke'Andrea Ray introduced the graduates and they recited the H.I.M pledge. Mr. Josh Stokes provided special recognitions and presentation of diplomas. Closing remarks were given by Mr. Bowman and the H.I.M graduates had a closing prayer.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

DYS School District Hosts Educational Events for Youth

Alabama History Days

The Alabama Writers' Forum (AWF), in collaboration with the Alabama Humanities Alliance (AHA) and the Department of Youth Services (DYS), This initiative ran at the Mt. Meigs and Vacca Campus during the 2025-2026 school year. As part of this program, a Teaching Historian was hired and trained to lead classes twice a week, totaling 18 sessions. During these classes, students were engaged in history research projects, guided by the Teaching Historian and a cooperating teacher from DHS. The curriculum adhered to the standards set forth by the Alabama Humanities Alliance and National History Day. A culminating event, tentatively titled "History Day," was held at Mt. Meigs to showcase the students' research projects. This celebration will invite parents, DHS staff, and administration to honor the achievements of the students. Additionally, if deemed appropriate by AHA and DHS, selected student projects may be featured at the Alabama History Day event in Montgomery. Culminating activities for both campuses were successfully held on May 14 and 15, 2025, marking a significant milestone in the program's development.



Skills for Success Hands-On Career Training Simulator

On May 18th & 19th in the LB Wallace School and May 20th on the Autauga Valley School the Skills for Success Hands-on Career Training Simulator training Trailers were on campus. The Alabama Community College System Innovation Center provided hands-on career exploration experiences for students from both the L.B. Wallace and Autauga Valley Schools through ACCS's Skills for Success program. During the three-day site visit, students had the opportunity to operate interactive mobile simulators designed to introduce careers in heavy equipment operation and commercial driving. Participants engaged in simulated excavator, 18-wheeler, and forklift exercises, allowing them to experience real-world workforce training in a safe, interactive environment. Every student, along with several staff members, participated in the simulations, gaining valuable exposure to high-demand career pathways and technical skills opportunities available through ACCS programs.



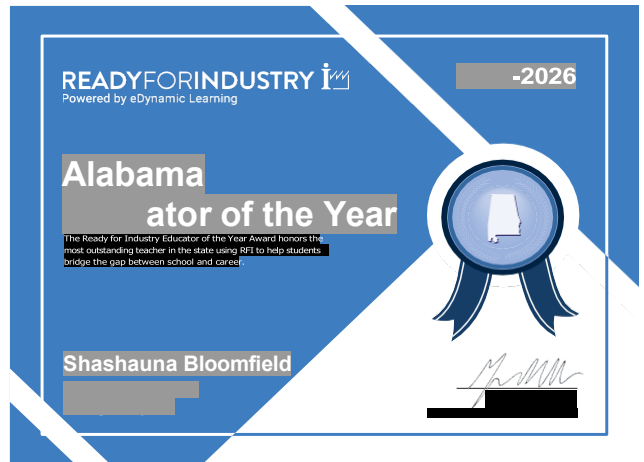
DYS HIGHLIGHTS

Celebrating Excellence: Dr. Bloomfield Named Ready for Industry Educator of the Year

The Alabama Department of Youth Services School District proudly recognizes Dr. Bloomfield as this year's Ready for Industry (RFI) Educator of the Year, an honor awarded to Alabama's most outstanding educator dedicated to preparing students for success beyond the classroom.

Dr. Bloomfield has successfully incorporated the Ready for Industry program, powered by eDynamic Learning, into her classroom, providing students with meaningful, career-focused learning experiences. Through innovative instruction and hands-on engagement, she has helped students build practical skills and gain valuable insight into high-demand industries.

This recognition highlights not only Dr. Bloomfield's excellence in the classroom, but also her commitment to equipping students with the tools they need for future success. The district celebrates this achievement and extends its gratitude for the lasting impact she continues to make in the lives of her students.



Extended Family Success for Life



On May 7th, Mr. Jerry Clemons, Reentry Coordinator, Extended Family Success for Life came and made a presentation to the school who are in the GED and Post-secondary program in the Training and Advancement Center on the Wallace School Campus. Mr. Clemons shared his story of his time in prison and how and who help him transition successfully back into society. Mr. Clemons and the Extended Family Team provided contact information and offered services to our students as they transition back into their communalities. Extended Family for Success is a community-based, 501©3 non-profit support system for families of prisoners and prisoners.

DYS School District Participates in the Tuskegee University College Career Fair

On Tuesday, April 28th, the DYS School District participated in the School of Education College Career Fair. Many schools systems participated as well as businesses and community agencies from across the state.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

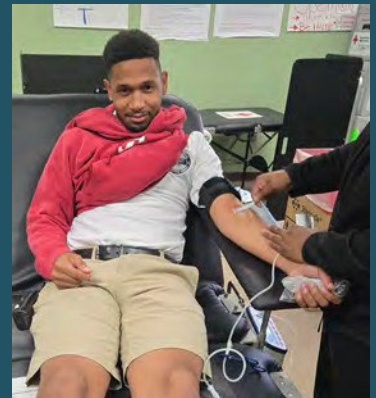
Autauga Campus Hosts Youth and Staff Events in May

Staff Health and Wellness Event

On Wednesday, May 13th, the Autauga Campus held a health and wellness event for staff from 9 am to 12 noon. Activities included wellness screenings and a blood drive. The campus was thrilled to share the impact the faculty and staff made. Thanks to everyone who rolled up their sleeves and donated. Blood drives are a vital part of supporting local hospitals and patients in need, and the Autauga Campus community demonstrated incredible generosity and spirit. From first-time donors to regular lifesavers, your participation shows the power of coming together to make a difference.

A special thanks goes to Nurse Johnson for her role in coordinating this event, along with Autauga's medical department. Their commitment ensured that everything proceeded effectively and securely. Your contributions fostered a friendly and organized atmosphere for all the donors.

Thank you for helping save lives! Your willingness to give blood not only supports our local community but also sets a shining example of compassion and civic responsibility for our campus.



Annual Career Fair for Youth

The Autauga Campus hosted its annual "Career Fair" for students. This event was facilitated by the campus event director, Mr. L. Barnes. The fair provided a valuable opportunity for attendees to explore career paths, network with recruiters, and gain insights into the skills and experiences sought in today's job market.

The fair featured recruiters from the Army National Guard, Autauga Sheriff Department, and entrepreneur Mr. Del Baldwin. Attendees participated and engaged in one-on-one conversations with recruiters to discuss potential careers. Participants left the event with a deeper understanding of career opportunities, practical tips for entering their chosen fields, and valuable connections to support their professional growth. The event demonstrated the power of networking, preparation, and curiosity in shaping successful career paths.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

The Vacca Campus Hosts Spring Family Engagement Event

The Vacca Campus held a Spring family engagement event titled “Come Experience Our Progress” on May 27, 2026. The families were first introduced to the instructors of theatre/cooking (Ashley Vislaint, Kristi Crawford), music production (Eugene Wright), and Journey to Manhood (Jacobie Williams). The Vacca students shared poems, theatre, and rap presentations. The students and families participated in a reception afterwards.

Theatre Presentation

Act 1: The Heist

Act 2: Open Eyes

Act 3: “Slide some oil to me” (The Wiz)

Act 4: The Interrogation

Act 5: “I’m determined to be somebody’



The R.O.P Girls Program Hosts Special Prom Event

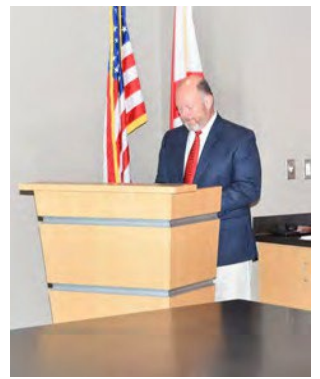
Every spring, the J. Walter Wood’s Rite of Passage (R.O.P) Residential Girls Residential Treatment facility hosts an annual prom event for the young women who are in the program. Staff and community volunteers assist to make this event special for all of the girls. This night is a night to shine! The young ladies wore beautiful prom dresses that were donated by generous community members. They were able to dress up, have fun, and feel special. Thank you to R.O.P. staff and volunteers who took time to make this event a memorable one for the attendees.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

WELCOME NEW DYS EMPLOYEES! MAY 2026 NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION CEREMONY

T'Keyah Anderson - Mt. Meigs Campus
Larry Brown - Autauga Campus
Donavaun Clarke - Mt. Meigs Campus
Levar Dixon - Autauga Campus
Ma'Liyah Evans - Vacca Campus
Martavious Franklin - Mt. Meigs Campus
Jymelle Grayson - Mt. Meigs Campus
Deontra Herbert - Mt. Meigs Campus
Rachel Smith - Mt. Meigs Campus
Edward Stringer IV - Mt. Meigs Campus
Shanaya Taylor - Autauga Campus



Thank You to Our Volunteers!

Special thank you Mr. And Mrs. Arrighi Taylor Road Baptist Church for the donation a massage chair for the staff development center.



National Day of Prayer

The National Day of Prayer is a special time when people across the country come together to pray for our communities, schools, families, leaders, and future. It reminds us that prayer is powerful and that we never have to face life's challenges alone. The Mt. Meigs Campus celebrated National Day of Prayer on May 7th in the Chapel. Volunteers (Ms. Lindsey Cope and Ms. Tabitha Vasilas) from Youth For Christ Church lead the staff and students in prayer.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

DYS Employee Council Update

Staff Appreciation Raffle

Each campus held a raffle during staff appreciation week. The DYS Employee Council sponsored gift card prizes. Congratulations to the winners!

1st Place \$50

Beth Clark (Education) – Autauga

Kadijah Washington (YSA) – Mt. Meigs

Mitchell Clements (YSA) – Vacca

2nd Place \$35

Joshunta Frazier (YSA) – Autauga

Danielle Barnette (Psych. Assoc. II) – Mt. Meigs

Victoria Anderson (YSA) – Vacca

3rd Place \$20

Lawrence Webster (YSA) – Autauga

Rhonda Peterson (Clinical Coordinator) – Mt. Meigs

Karen Clay (Nurse Coordinator) – Vacca



Cynthia Adams, Victoria Anderson, Karen Clay, and Mitchell Clements

COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES

Cynthia Adams (Vacca)

Liyah Anderson (Autauga)

Michelle Archie (Mt. Meigs)

Tonya Dorn (Mt. Meigs)

Kevin Hampton (Mt. Meigs)

LaShondra Hinton (Vacca)

Runyun Thomas (Autauga)



Joshunta Frazier and Beth Clark



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.
