



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

Mr. Trevaris Rogers



Vacca Campus

Joseph Woody
Maintenance



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

August 2026 Newsletter

Greetings DYS Employees,

As children, we use to love summer and it was our favorite time of year. Maybe because we were out of school and had far more free time to do what we wanted to do. I hope each of you were able to find some time this Summer to do something special with your friends and/or families. Soon the regiment of the school calendar will dictate our routines, if we still have children in the house. We are willing to sacrifice these things and count them as special years when we watch our children graduate and walk across the aisle wearing a cap and gown.

The same is true for our youth in our care. The faculty and staff have sacrificed daily in numerous ways to help get that young person across the stage/ sanctuary to receive their diploma or GED. We look forward to celebrating again with the Wallace School Faculty and our students on August 11th at Mt. Meigs Campus.

We also look forward to celebrating Dr. Tracy Smitherman, Superintendent and Mr. Shawn Stinson, Deputy Director for Administration and Contracts, as they enter into retirement. We are so grateful to Dr. Smitherman for over 35 years of dedicated service to DYS in various capacities. She has been a wealth of institutional knowledge and a vocal advocate for the work our faculty and students perform at DYS School District 210.

We wish Mr. Stinson all the best as he retires from State service. He promised to give DYS 3 years, but he gave a little more because he thought the work was important, and he could not only make a difference, but make it easier and more effective for others. I have no idea what Mr. Stinson will wear in retirement because he wore a tie and jacket every day, all day!

We will have lost 3 Executive Staff in 60 days (Ms. Allen, Mr. Stinson, and Dr. Smitherman). Soon, we will all have to get to know new faces. We did this before in 2022. As we move through this transitional period I ask each of you for your patience, and continued dedication to your area of responsibility. In the midst of the struggle, there is still a number of positive and promising opportunities taking place each day across DYS and the state.

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.

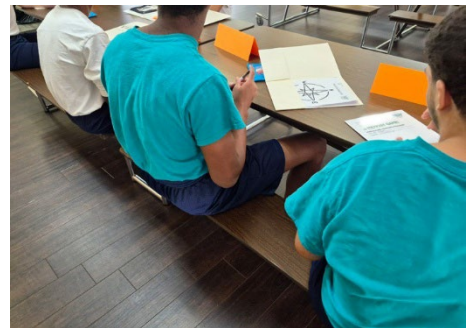
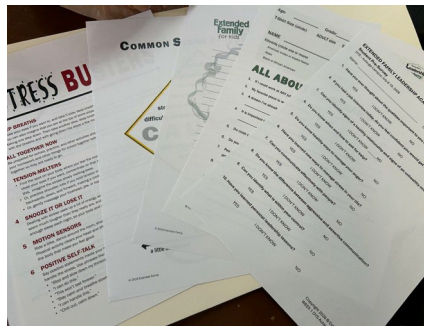
Extended Family Leadership Academy Provides New Program to Youth at the Autauga Campus

During the month of July, students at the Autauga Campus participated in the Extended Family Leadership Academy (EFLA), a two-week leadership and life skills program designed to prepare young people for success beyond DYS. Led by Extended Family Executive Director Laure Clemons and Assistant Director Daphne Rogers, the academy provided youth with practical tools to strengthen communication, build resilience, develop career readiness, and create a positive vision for their future.

Throughout the academy, students engaged in 18 interactive lessons focused on personal growth and real-world success. The curriculum challenged participants to explore important questions such as:

- **What are the qualities of your dream job?**
- **How can you communicate assertively?**
- **How do you manage stress and anger in healthy ways?**
- **Where will you be in 10 years?**

Each lesson encouraged self-reflection while equipping students with practical strategies they can apply in everyday life. The Extended Family Leadership Academy reflects DYS's ongoing commitment to preparing youth for successful futures by fostering leadership, accountability, and personal responsibility. Programs like EFLA help young people develop the confidence and life skills needed to make positive choices, pursue meaningful careers, and become productive members of their communities.



DYS HIGHLIGHTS

Church of the Highlands Provides Day of Fellowship for Youth and Staff at the Mt. Meigs Campus

On July 18, 2026, the Mt. Meigs Campus welcomed the Church of the Highlands for a special time of fellowship with the youth and staff. Their team generously provided a delicious meal of hamburgers, hot dogs, macaroni and cheese, baked beans, chips, and cake for everyone to enjoy.

In addition to the wonderful meal, they shared an inspiring message of hope and encouragement that touched the hearts of those in attendance. Throughout the event, the youth enjoyed participating in a variety of activities, including playing card games, other interactive games, and painting. These activities provided opportunities for creativity, laughter, teamwork, and meaningful fellowship.

The opportunity to gather together, share a meal, participate in fun activities, and hear an uplifting message made for a memorable and meaningful day. We extend our sincere appreciation to Church of the Highlands for their generosity, kindness, and commitment to serving our youth and staff.



Vacca Campus Hosts Why Try Graduation and Student-Led DBT Olympics

During the month of July, the youth at the Vacca Campus recently marked meaningful milestones in two outstanding programs: the Why Try Group through Vineyard Family Service and the Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Group. For the Why Try Program, the youth completed eight weeks of mentorship and training in the Why Try Group. Facilitators Mr. Jerry McClain and Mr. Courtney Hardy guided the cohort with energy and genuine passion for supporting young people. A few parents joined the graduation celebration, offering extra encouragement and reinforcing the importance of family involvement.

The DBT Group, facilitated by Transitional Case Manager Tabranecia Patterson with support from Youth Services Team Leader Erica Alexander, helped youth step into a leadership role. The group was designed as "DBT Olympics"—a series of engaging games built around core DBT skills. Youth practiced the STOP Skill, Opposite Action, Mindfulness, and the Three States of Mind through interactive activities. The student-led format highlighted how deeply the youth are internalizing the skills and how ready they are to share them with their peers.



Mt. Meigs Campus Celebrates Hope Inspired Ministries Graduation

On Thursday, July 30th, the Mt. Meigs Campus celebrated the 2nd 2026 graduation class for seven youth. The graduation ceremony included a welcome and opening prayer by Mr. John Bowman, introduction of graduates by Ms. Ke'Andrea Ray, the H.I.M. pledge, and special recognitions and presentation of diplomas by Mr. Josh Stokes. The closing remarks were provided by Mr. John Bowman, and the closing prayer was provided by an H.I.M. graduate. Congratulations to all of the youth who graduated!



DYS to Launch TeleStaff Workforce Management System in November

DYS will introduce TeleStaff, a modern workforce management system designed to enhance how we schedule and manage staffing. TeleStaff will streamline scheduling processes, improve communication, increase transparency, and help ensure the right personnel are assigned where they're needed most. By automating many of our scheduling tasks, the system will reduce administrative time while providing employees with greater visibility into their schedules and staffing opportunities. Additional information, training resources, and implementation updates will be shared as we prepare for the program's launch sometime in November.

DYS and AUM Host Supervisor Development Training Program

DYS continues its commitment to developing effective leaders through its Supervisor Development Training Program. The training was held in March and again in July for all supervisors. Facilitated by Auburn University at Montgomery's Office of Continuing Education, the training was designed to further equip and inspire supervisors with the tools needed to succeed in their roles. Beyond skill-building, the program created space for colleagues to connect in a supportive and engaging environment. This program helps supervisors improve day-to-day leadership, foster stronger teams, and navigate challenges with greater effectiveness. The interactive format encourages practical application and peer learning, ensuring participants leave ready to apply new insights in their work.





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.
