

# THE DJJ Digest

Fall 2016

The Official Newsletter of the Department of Juvenile Justice

Volume 1, No. 3

## New Member Appointed and Multiple Members Re-Appointed to Board of Department of Juvenile Justice



DJJ Board Member Penny A. Penn from Canton (Congressional District 7)

Penny A. Penn, the district attorney for the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit, was appointed to the Board of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) by Governor Nathan Deal. She represents Congressional District 7.

"On behalf of the Department, I welcome the appointment of District Attorney Penn to the DJJ Board," said DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles. "Ms. Penn has an outstanding record in law enforcement, and her experience will be helpful to me and the DJJ staff."

Commenting on her appointment, Penn stated, "I am honored to be appointed by Governor Deal to the DJJ Board. I look forward to serving the citizens of the state by working with the other members of the Board in their efforts to assist the Department of Juvenile Justice with its mission to rehabilitate youthful offenders."



DJJ Board Chair Elaine P. Snow, the retired Chief of Police for the City of Rome, said "I know I speak for each member of the DJJ Board in welcoming District Attorney Penny Penn to the Board. We look forward to her active participation in our work."

Penn has served as the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit District Attorney since January 2003. She is an elected state constitutional officer charged with the prosecution of felony offenses committed in Forsyth County. She is also responsible for a range of administrative and managerial duties related to the office.

Prior to her election, Penn served as the Chief Assistant District Attorney for the Bell-Forsyth Judicial Circuit from November 1998 until January 2003. Her responsibilities included the prosecution of felony cases (including serving as the lead counsel in 25 jury trials). She argued cases before the Georgia Supreme Court and Court of Appeals. She also assisted the District

Attorney with administrative matters, including budgetary and personnel decisions. Penn also trained and supervised assistant district attorneys.

Penn's previous experience includes the Fulton County District Attorney's Office and the Fulton County Public Defender's Office. She earned a bachelor's degree from Wheaton College in Massachusetts and a juris doctor degree from the Emory University School of Law.

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In addition to the appointment of Penn, Governor Deal reappointed the following members of the DJJ Board:



**Board Chairman Elaine P. Snow**  
from Lindale (Congressional District 14)

Chairman Snow retired as Chief of the Rome Police Department after 41 years of service. She is a member of the Georgia Crime Information Center advisory board and the Greater Rome Convention & Visitors Bureau board. Snow is also a member of the Rome-Floyd County Commission on Children & Youth, the Rome-Floyd Community of Hope Task Team and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Committee. She is a graduate of the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange, Georgia Law Enforcement Command College and FBI National Academy. Snow earned a bachelor's degree from Jacksonville State University and a master's degree from Columbus State University.



**Board Member Dr. Thomas Coleman**  
from Lithonia (Congressional District 4)

Coleman is a retired U.S. Air Force officer and Vietnam veteran with more than 25 years of military service. He served for over 12 years at the Department of Juvenile Justice as Chief Deputy Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the Programs, Education and Youth Development Division. Coleman received a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University, earned his master's degree in Public Administration from Central Michigan University and a doctoral degree in Higher Education Administration from Clark Atlanta University. He is a former Director of the Governor's Office of Highway Safety and a volunteer commissioner with the DeKalb County Housing Authority.



**Board Member Kelly Stewart**  
from Johns Creek  
(Congressional District 6)

Stewart is a former vice president of human resources for the Lucas Group. She previously held a seat on the Johns Creek City Council and also served as Mayor Pro Tem. Stewart sits on the board of directors for Israel Bonds and Friends of the Israel Defense Forces. She is a member of the Georgia leadership councils for Birthright Israel and Christians United for Israel. Stewart earned an associate's degree from Gainesville State University, a bachelor's degree in Public Administration from Brenau University and a master's degree in City Planning from Georgia Tech.





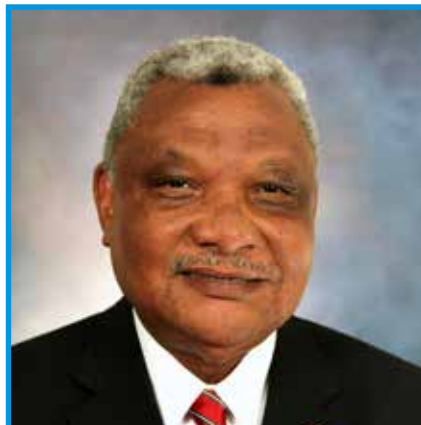
**Board Member Angie M. Holt**  
from Warner Robins  
(Congressional District 8)

Holt is director of the Office of Professional Standards at the Georgia Department of Public Safety. Her law enforcement career spans more than 30 years, with professional contributions to five Georgia criminal justice agencies including the Georgia Bureau of Investigation (GBI), Georgia State Patrol, the Department of Family and Children's Services, as a consultant for the State Board of Pardons and Paroles and for Georgia's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Holt's GBI assignments as Special Agent included investigating public corruption crimes with a Special Prosecutions Task Force. As GBI Assistant Special Agent in Charge she developed law enforcement training protocols for officers assigned to the 1996 Olympic Games. Holt is currently president of the Georgia Internal Affairs Investigators Association and sits on the board of trustees for the International Association of Women Police. She earned a bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and a master's degree in Public Administration from Georgia Southern University.



**Board Member Fred Stephens**  
from Cleveland (Congressional District 9)

Stephens is the interim chief of the Clarke County School District Police Department. He retired as a GBI agent after more than 31 years of service, then served as assistant police chief of support services and field operations for the Athens-Clarke County Police Department. Stephens is a graduate of the FBI National Academy, the Georgia Law Enforcement Command College and Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange. Chief Stephens earned his bachelor's degree from Newberry College and a master's degree in Public Administration from Columbus State University.



**Board Member Willie C. Bolton**  
from Athens (Congressional District 10)

Bolton was the Director and Warden of the Athens-Clarke County Department of Corrections for 20 years before his recent retirement. He was with the Athens-Clarke County Government for 41 years, including 21 years with the Clarke County Sheriff's Office. He serves on the Athens Regional Medical

Center Hospital Authority and the Georgia Public Safety Training Center Advisory Board. He is a member of the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Association of Chiefs of Police, the Georgia Prison Wardens Association, American Correctional Association, North American Association of Wardens and Superintendents and Peace Officers Association of Georgia. He is a POST General, Firearms Instructor and Departmental Training Officer. He also has an Executive and Management POST certification and a Peace Officer and Correctional Officer certification. Bolton earned a bachelor's degree from Brenau University and a master's degree from Clark Atlanta University.



**Board Member Dick Yarbrough** from Atlanta (Congressional District 11)

Yarbrough is a veteran writer and syndicated Georgia columnist whose work is published regularly and read widely in newspapers and magazines throughout the state. He was a vice president of the BellSouth Corporation before his retirement. As managing director of communications for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, his work was instrumental in the successful execution of the Centennial Olympic Games. Yarbrough is a graduate of the University of Georgia and a past president of the UGA Alumni Association.



# An Update on Georgia Juvenile Justice Reform



**Governor Nathan Deal signed the Juvenile Justice reform legislation on May 2, 2013**

DJJ Deputy Commissioner Joe Vignati made a presentation on the progress to-date of Georgia's juvenile justice reform efforts as well as remaining challenges and opportunities, at the Prosecuting Attorneys Council's (PAC) annual training. This article is based on his presentation.

While the PAC and prosecutors across Georgia (including Danny Porter, Gwinnett County District Attorney and former DJJ Board member) helped develop the reform efforts, some of the nearly 50 juvenile prosecutors in attendance were not as aware of the progress that has been made over the past three years (since the law went into effect).

## Reforming Juvenile Justice

The seeds of juvenile justice reform were sown in 2012, when Governor Nathan Deal asked the Special Council on Criminal Justice Reform to study the juvenile justice system. In December of that year the Council issued recommendations that provided guidance and helped to shape the Governor's legislative effort to create a new juvenile justice code and reforms.

Why were reform efforts needed? At that time, there was an over-reliance on secure detention for juveniles, which led to both the poor use of resources and a poor return on taxpayers' funds. The Council learned that nearly two-thirds of the DJJ's \$300 million budget was used to operate out-of-home facilities (secure and non-secure residential facilities). The cost of secure placements was approximately \$90,000 per youth per year. In addition, 25 percent of youth in out-of-home placement were incarcerated for low-level offenses (misdemeanors and status offenses). Moreover, 40 percent of all youth in out-of-home placements were assessed as low risk to re-offend.

The Council considered how to implement Georgia's juvenile justice system more responsibly, which many believed would help address some of the problems facing the state. For example, communities with high unemployment, underachieving schools and a lack of other resources have higher rates of crime. These conditions are detrimental to many, but particularly hurt children and young adults who may end up in the juvenile justice system.

## A New Mandate for DJJ

It was hypothesized that if Georgia took a more common-sense approach to solving the problems that plagued some communities, then crime could be reduced and public safety enhanced. At the same time, it was understood that if Georgia continued to spend financial resources to send more people to prison instead of using proven alternatives, those problems would remain.

Specifically, the Council identified practical options that could be undertaken to address these and other issues. Under juvenile justice reform, grants are provided to local communities for programs that have been shown to work. Georgia is moving towards a more targeted use of public resources through an investment in outcomes. This more responsible and responsive approach to juvenile justice is helping to make our state safer and is helping all Georgians.

Among the Council's recommendations that were included in the "Children's Code" in 2013 were: focusing out-of-home facilities on high-level offenders; prohibiting status offenders and certain misdemeanants from residential commitment; establishing a voluntary fiscal incentive grant program; and creating a two-class system within the Designated Felony Act.

In addition, there was a focus on reducing recidivism. Among the recommendations to achieve this objective were: ensuring that resources are focused on programs proven to reduce recidivism; requiring the use of risk assessments; and allowing low-level offenders to be placed on administrative caseloads.

From implementation in 2014 through 2018, these common-sense changes were projected to avert \$85 million in costs. Under the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, statutes were changed and DJJ was given a new mandate. The "intent is to preserve and strengthen family relationships to allow each child to live in safety and security." This was a major change from Georgia's previous juvenile code, and a watershed moment for all involved in juvenile justice in the state. Among the expected outcomes of juvenile justice reform are:

- Population changes – the revised Juvenile Code redefines the population served by specifying Child in Need of Services (CHINS) cases, the establishment of limits on restrictive custody for the two categories of designated felons and an emphasis on youth being served in the least restrictive settings. These changes are resulting in fewer youth in DJJ secure facilities.
- Evidence-based practices – there is a new emphasis on these practices, services and assessments.
- Unified data collection – merged data collection now occurs statewide. Full legal information from all juvenile courts is available.
- Institutional funding shifted to community services – to sustain juvenile justice reform, the difficult process of re-directing budget priorities has begun.



DJJ Deputy Commissioner Joe Vignati

Among early changes evident from the reform are:

- Status offenders are now described as CHINS; they should not be detained except under limited circumstances and for a limited time.
- Fewer lower-risk youth are being confined in DJJ facilities; however, DJJ still houses medium- and high-risk youth, including violent offenders.
- Services for medium-risk and some high-risk youth are now being provided in the community.
- Funding is being offered through grants for community-based services for delinquent youth.

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- A continuum of new and validated assessments/tools are being used as part of the new processes in the juvenile justice system. Among these new assessments and tools are:
  - \* Detention Assessment Instrument (DAI)
  - \* Pre-Disposition Risk Assessment (PDRA)
  - \* Structured Dispositional Matrix (SDM)
  - \* Juvenile Needs Assessment (JNA)

These assessments and tools were among the Council's recommendations and were then mandated by the new Children's Code. They were developed with broad stakeholder participation (judges, law enforcement, prosecutors, public defenders, probation officers, etc.) and the National Council on Crime & Delinquency for validity and reliability. These tools allow for more objective decision-making.

However, if recidivism is to be reduced in the juvenile justice system, decision-making processes (supervision, service, resource allocation) must be based on validated risk and needs assessments.

DJJ has implemented DAI and other risk assessment tools statewide with the assistance of law enforcement and the judiciary. For example, DAI was implemented during summer 2014. It is now being used by DJJ staff and all Juvenile Courts. Also, PRDA, a structured dispositional matrix and JNA are being utilized.

### **Changes Are Having Key Impacts**

The Juvenile Incentive grant program is now in its third year, and serves the 60 counties that represent 70 percent of Georgia's at-risk juvenile population. The amount of grant funding for local projects in FY2014 was \$6 million; the amount of grant funding for local, family-based services in FY2017 is \$8.8 million.

Governor Deal also appointed a Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative Statewide Committee. Its mission is to assist with equity and appropriateness in detention decisions across the state.

While the juvenile justice reform effort is having positive impacts statewide, the changes within DJJ are dramatic. There have been increases in community-based options. There has been an 18 percent decrease in the number of youth in the secure population at DJJ facilities, as well as a 51 percent decrease in the number of youth awaiting placement. However, the DJJ mandate has not changed – enhancing the safety of the youth in the Department's care, as well as ensuring the youth get appropriate services quicker.

The Department has taken a variety of actions to impact the lives of young people, including: properly assessing and placing youth in appropriate settings, based on risk; DJJ has taken two detention centers off-line, accounting for 149 beds and a YDC off-line, representing 110 beds; and DJJ is re-directing \$2.4 million into non-secure residential step-down beds. (These additional beds will allow youth to be integrated into local settings in order to better effectuate their pro-social behavior and prepare them for future success.) The agency is increasing local capacity for evidence-based models proven to improve outcomes, such as functional family therapy, multi-systemic therapy, the "Thinking For A Change" program and others; and the Juvenile Data Exchange Project is in its first phase, which includes sharing of juvenile court data among courts and DJJ.

DJJ is also developing a juvenile data dictionary and juvenile data repository in order to meet a recommendation of the Criminal Reform Council. This will allow the collection of (at a minimum) the specifics of a juvenile offense, as well as demographic, DAI and PDRA data elements for all juvenile court youth in Georgia. DJJ is also developing a plan to measure and establish the model fidelity of evidence-based juvenile interventions across Georgia's juvenile system to ensure that the system is delivering the outcomes the youth and citizens of Georgia expect. Finally, DJJ is working with others to enhance communications regarding the implementation of juvenile reforms.

By leading the way in reducing commitments, juvenile justice reform in Georgia has made it possible not only to avoid the construction of new facilities, but to reduce the population in existing facilities. This ensures that these facilities are safer. The cost avoidance that accompanies these continued reductions will enable Georgia to continue its investment in local, family-based solutions proven to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety.



## DJJ Enthusiastically Supports Governor Deal's Law Enforcement Pay and Training Package



DJJ staff at the Georgia Capitol following the Governor's announcement

Georgia Governor Nathan Deal announced a pay and training package that includes a 20 percent pay raise for more than 3,300 state law enforcement officers and a multi-phase overhaul of officer training and certification courses. The pay increase is effective January 1, 2017, and represents more than \$78 million in state funding in the amended FY17 budget and the FY18 budget.

"Since Georgia's founding, one of government's primary roles is the protection of its people," Deal said. "While the responsibility to provide for the public's safety has not changed over time, the demands of fulfilling this fundamental obligation have changed and grown. We ask our law enforcement personnel at all levels and ranks to do a very difficult job, one that requires great skill, long suffering and dedication of purpose. It is incumbent upon the government to recruit and retain the best and brightest, while equipping them with the training and resources they require. They deserve our unwavering commitment and support."

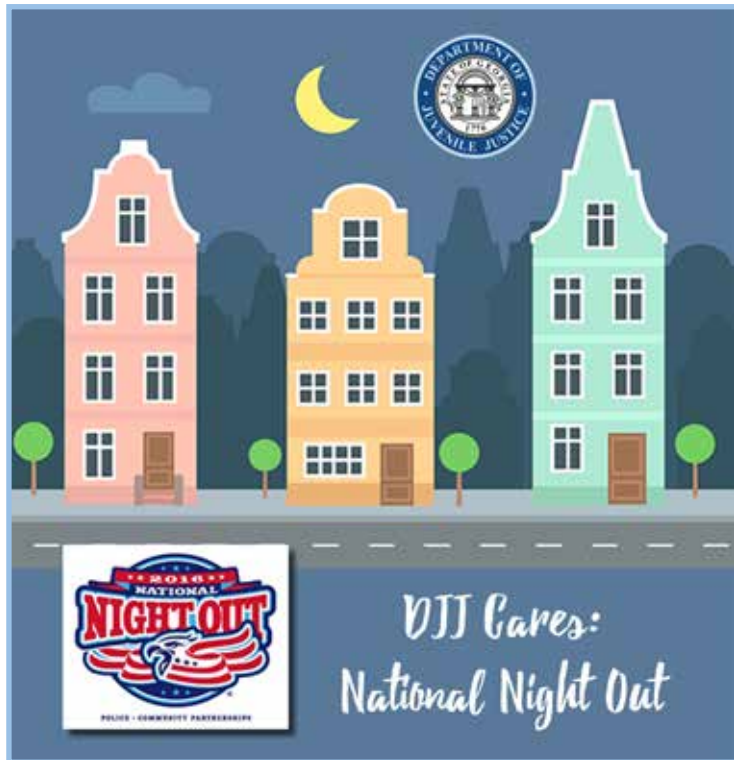
Governor Deal continued, "To that end, I've crafted a law enforcement proposal consisting of two major components: more pay for our state officers who risk their lives every day; and changes to how we train both state and local authorities who have the power to make arrests."

Avery D. Niles, Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice, stated, "On behalf of the 135 DJJ law enforcement staff positively impacted by this package, we are very grateful to Governor Deal and the Georgia General Assembly. Like law enforcement officers in other areas of state government, DJJ law enforcement personnel perform difficult and dangerous tasks daily, and this pay increase helps recognize their outstanding work. Moreover, additional training will help them and those they serve."



# DJJ Cares: National Night Out

National Night Out was established in 1984 with funding from the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The program is administered by the National Association of Town Watch, a nationwide organization dedicated to the development, maintenance and protection of community-based, law enforcement-affiliated crime prevention activities.



The traditional "lights on" campaign and symbolic front porch vigils turned into a celebration across America with various events and activities including, but not limited to, block parties, cookouts, parades, visits from law enforcement and emergency services personnel, rallies and marches, exhibits, youth events, safety demonstrations and seminars. Each helps to heighten awareness and enhance community relations.

Project 365, which helps communities target specific problems over the course of the year, was also developed with BJA funding. National Night Out's objectives also include refining the nationwide crime prevention campaign, documenting successful crime prevention strategies, expanding Project 365, disseminating information about successful community-based strategies, providing technical assistance on crime prevention program development and developing the National Night Out website.

With continued support from BJA, National Night Out is making communities across the nation safer places to live. To learn more about National Night Out, visit:

<https://natw.org/>

National Night Out is a community-law enforcement awareness event that was developed as a crime prevention program to emphasize partnerships between law enforcement agencies and the community. Held the first Tuesday in August, National Night Out is meant to increase education about law enforcement programs such as drug prevention, neighborhood watch and other anti-crime efforts.

National Night Out – "America's Night Out Against Crime" – promotes community involvement in crime prevention activities, police-community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. The program also seeks to make neighborhoods safer and better places to live. Effective crime prevention begins with strong neighborhoods and strong community relationships. It also sends a message to criminals – letting them know that neighborhoods are organized and fighting back. National Night Out now involves over 37 million people and 15,000 communities in all 50 states, U.S. Territories, Canadian cities and military bases worldwide.



**The Third Annual Lyons Night Out**





**Macon-Bibb Sheriff David Davis at a National Night Out activity**

In Georgia, the Department of Juvenile Justice is proud to partner with host communities across the state for National Night Out.

The Lyons Police Department and Toombs County Sheriff's Department hosted the third annual Lyons Night Out to support National Night Out. DJJ participated in this effort, which brought together community groups to showcase local law enforcement. Partnering with Family Connections and the Lyons Fire Department, DJJ helped to staff educational booths that provided citizens information about car seat safety, helped distribute children's books and taught children the importance of dental hygiene. Inflated bounce houses were set up for the entertainment of young attendees and a cookout lunch of hot dogs and hamburgers was also provided.

In Macon-Bibb County, more than 300 senior citizens came out to support National Night Out. Macon-Bibb Sheriff David Davis also stopped by to offer his support and to answer questions from the crowd.

DJJ staff also participated in National Night Out activities in College Park.



**Neighbors and law enforcement in College Park celebrating National Night Out**

# DJJ Board Member Speaks to the



POAG Keynote Speaker Dick Yarbrough (center) with DJJ Office of Classification and Transportation Director Lisa Casey Bryson and POAG Executive Director (and DJJ Board Member) John Edwards

Dick Yarbrough, DJJ Board member representing Congressional District 11, was a keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Peace Officers Association of Georgia (POAG) in Savannah on August 22.

POAG is the oldest and largest organization of its type in Georgia. The membership includes local, state and federal law enforcement officers of all ranks and duties – from corrections officers to district attorneys and corporate security staff – with the power of arrest in Georgia.

In his remarks, Yarbrough said that there are four professions that require a calling – the ministry, teaching, medicine and public safety. “The thing common to all four is that they touch lives directly – none more than you [public safety officials],” he stated. “All of you, from district attorneys to state agency heads to our men and women of law enforcement – you are the fabric that holds our society together!”

Yarbrough has had a distinguished career, holding major positions at AT&T, serving as Vice President of Public Relations at BellSouth Corporation and then Managing Director of Communications for the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, which staged the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games. Today, he is the most widely read columnist in Georgia, appearing in more than 30 newspapers with over one million readers weekly. While his column has twice been voted by the Georgia Press Association as “Best Humor Column,” Yarbrough told his audience that “a number of politicians around the state have asked for a recount!” Yarbrough said his “aim is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable,” a phrase coined in 1902 by *Chicago Evening Post* journalist Finley Peter Dunne. Yarbrough notes that while some of his readers may not agree with what he writes they can count on him to always tell the truth.

Speaking about the outcry and physical violence by some against law enforcement over the past year, Yarbrough commented, “Sadly, we live in an age where our society seems to value those that entertain us – like actors and athletes – more than those who educate us and protect us. As I wrote in one my columns, if you are having a life-threatening emergency at your home at 2:00 a.m., who are you going to call, an overpaid athlete or the underpaid police?”

Continuing his remarks, Yarbrough said, “Today, you must deal in a society that does not respect authority – from parents to teachers to law enforcement to our criminal justice system. I see it every day; you live it every day!”

# Peace Officers Association of Georgia

"The situation has been exacerbated by 24/7 news coverage in which being first with a story has become more important than being correct and by social media that can and does excite and incite – all in anonymity. The result? An unprecedented assault on the men and women of law enforcement."

Yarbrough stated, "The critics conveniently ignore the work you do day in and day out, as well as the heroics of those you have honored tonight. As a nation, we should honor daily those saving lives and making the streets and neighborhoods of our cities and towns safer." Yarbrough also said, "One suggestion I would make to you is to continue to think about the interactions that you have with the public. Sometimes it is an interaction that neither of you want, but it is necessary to uphold the law and to protect us from ourselves. I also know that there is an inclination to become defensive when you hear or read the criticism and second-guessing from those we both know could not do what you do. I wish every Georgian could be here tonight to experience what I have and to gain a better understanding of the outstanding professionalism and camaraderie that exists among the members of POAG."



In closing, Yarbrough told the attendees, "I am honored to be in the same room with the heroes that you have recognized tonight. I can tell you that that the vast majority of people in our country have a tremendous amount of respect for you and for what you do. Don't forget that. You do what you do because you are dedicated. It is your profession – your calling. And I am glad there is an organization like the Peace Officers Association of Georgia to support you with better training, professional growth and public policy support."

John B. Edwards represents Congressional District 12 on the DJJ Board. After a 30-year career, he retired as a Special Agent in Charge with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and then served as Chief Deputy with the Evans County Sheriff's Office. Edwards currently serves as the Executive Director of POAG. Edwards also consults for various local, state and federal law enforcement agencies throughout the United States.

Edwards stated, "Dick Yarbrough brought a unique blend of humor and serious reflection that meant so much to our crowd of 400 attendees. Our night was dedicated toward honoring a diverse array of Georgia's finest officers in their hours of trial – where courage and bravery was at a premium. Dick molded the evening into a heartfelt and special time for all!"

Willie C. Bolton represents Congressional District 10 on the DJJ Board. He is also a POAG member and attended the meeting. "I think that Board Member Yarbrough's remarks were timely and well-received by the POAG membership," Bolton said.

The Director and Warden of the Athens-Clarke County Department of Corrections for 20 years before his recent retirement, Bolton served Athens-Clarke County for 41 years, including 21 years with the Clarke County Sheriff's Office.



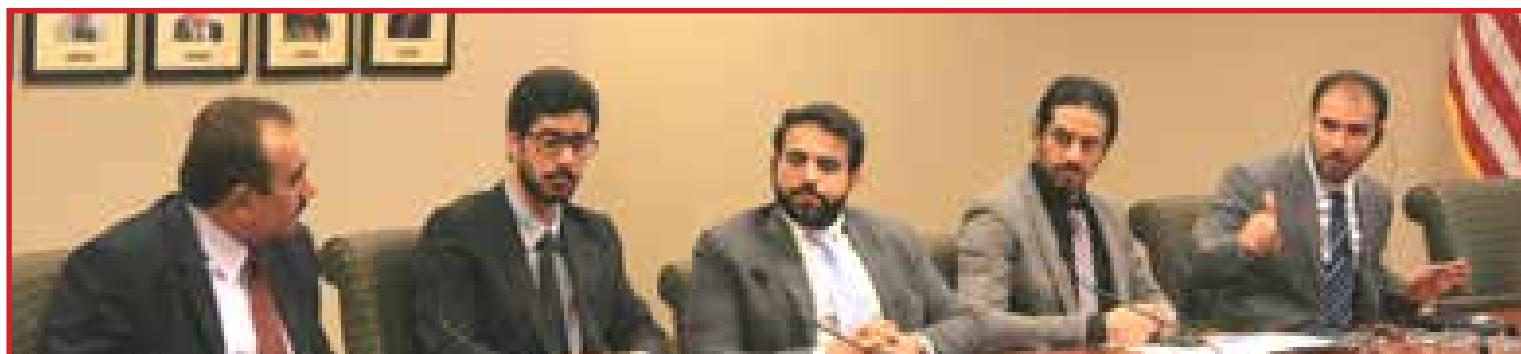
DJJ Board Member Willie Bolton

# DJJ Outreach: Bahrain Judicial Project



As part of the United States Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program, the Department of Juvenile Justice was honored on August 3 with a special visit from a group of high-ranking judges from the Kingdom of Bahrain. Observing the United States legal system with a focus on how courts intersect with all aspects of American culture, the Bahraini dignitaries were interested in learning about DJJ's role in Georgia's most recent juvenile justice reform.

DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles and DJJ Deputy Commissioner Joe Vignati led the overview discussion of Georgia's juvenile justice reform since its inception in 2014. They pointed out the emphasis placed on data-driven decisions and the importance of local programming to help transition youth back into their communities. Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton stressed the need for a stable family environment and education in order to ensure present and future success for Georgia's youth.



Mr. Bader Abdullatif Mohamed Alabdulla, Judge, High Criminal Court, Ministry of Justice

Mr. Waleed Khaled Hasan Ali Raban Alazmi, Judge, Ministry of Justice

Mr. Thaled Ahmed Saleh Almedfa, Judge, Ministry of Justice

Mr. Omar Ali Mahmood Abdulrahim Alsaedi, Judge, Major Civilian Court, Supreme Judicial Council

Mr. Isa Mohamed Isa Abdulla Darraj, Judge, Major Civil Court Category (B), Ministry of Justice



All speakers underlined the point that juvenile justice reform is working, saving lives and resources for Georgia.

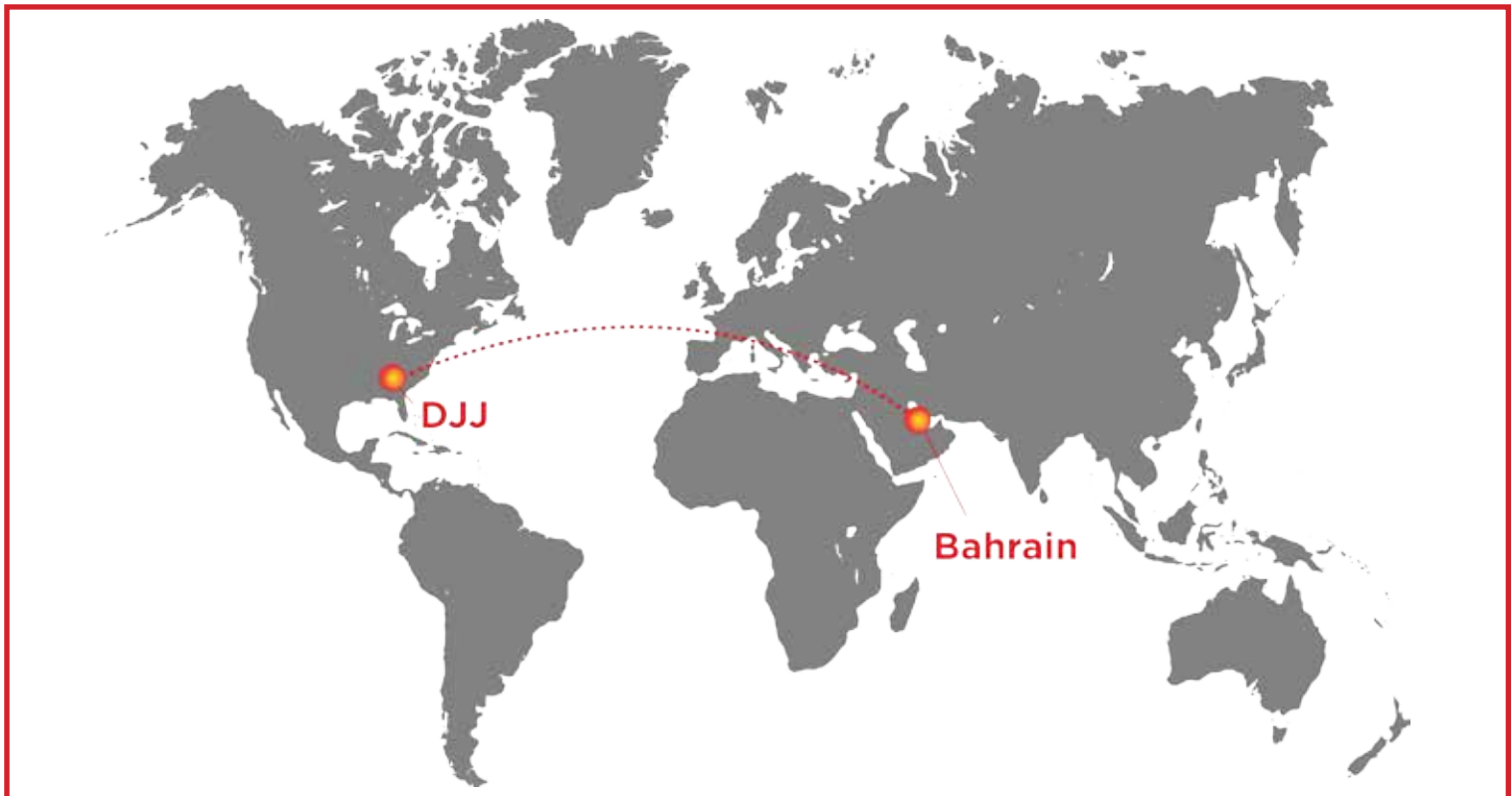
For the Bahraini judges, their mandate for juvenile protection comes from King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa who has said that youth are the true national currency of Bahrain. Keeping with

this sentiment, Bahrain has one of the leading juvenile justice programs in the Gulf Region. In Bahrain, judges have tremendous leeway to protect youth, including placement in a modern Youth Center featuring psychologists and social workers. Bahrain is also a signatory of the international Child Protection Treaty.

The Department of Juvenile Justice would like to thank all of the members of the Bahraini judicial delegation who were able to attend the presentation including:

- Mr. Bader Abdullatif Mohamed Alabdulla, Judge, High Criminal Court, Ministry of Justice
- Mr. Waleed Khaled Hasan Ali Raban Alazmi, Judge, Ministry of Justice
- Mr. Thaled Ahmed Saleh Almedfa, Judge, Ministry of Justice
- Mr. Omar Ali Mahmood Abdulrahim Alsaeedi, Judge, Major Civilian Court, Supreme Judicial Council
- Mr. Isa Mohamed Isa Abdulla Darraj, Judge, Major Civil Court Category (B), Ministry of Justice

To learn more about the International Visitor Leadership Program, visit: <https://eca.state.gov/ivlp>



# Views from the GJSA 45th Annual Summit

From August 31st through September 2nd, the Georgia Juvenile Services Association (GJSA) held its 45th Annual Training Summit in Savannah. The summit's purpose was to create networking opportunities for Georgia juvenile services workers to learn and implement the best practices in juvenile delinquency prevention, supervision, treatment and rehabilitation.

The Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) was a proud partner and sponsor of the 2016 GJSA Conference. In addition to supporting the career goals of its employees, DJJ leadership – including Commissioner Avery D. Niles, Deputy Commissioners Sarah Draper and Joe Vignati, Metro RYDC Director Margarett Redding and Office of Planning & Preparedness Director Scott Cagle all spoke at the training summit.



**DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles speaking at the 2016 GJSA Summit**

The message from Commissioner Niles was one of hope and support: "Juvenile justice reform is working. Challenge yourself to provide the best service for our youth. Because you work with our youth on a daily basis, you know more than any report that is written. Continue your good work in helping our youth to get the treatment and services they need, as well as reducing recidivism and reducing intake in our facilities."

Deputy Commissioner Draper spoke on the "swinging pendulum" of juvenile justice care, which is now focused on treatment and services. Draper said, "Georgia is on the forefront of juvenile justice in the nation. By embracing the future and accepting challenges, Georgia DJJ now has more programming and more therapeutic opportunities for our kids. Great things are happening in our facilities and in the communities."



**DJJ Deputy Commissioner Sarah Draper**



**DJJ Deputy Commissioner Joe Vignati**



**Laura Pike received the Harold K. Ables award**

Deputy Commissioner Joe Vignati knows that “persistence is the key to success at DJJ.” He said working at DJJ is “a fellowship of heart and soul. Success depends on building relationships with each other, other divisions in the Department, GJSA and with the communities we serve.”

Aside from the informative training and updates, the 2016 GJSA Summit also offered its attendees the chance to say “thank you” to many of their fellow employees through the presentation of special annual awards. Among the many award winners for 2016 were:

**Outstanding Community Worker - Tammy Droll, Douglas Community Services Offices (CSO)**

**The Gale Hilley Award - JCO Leslie Wyatt, Douglas CSO**

**Supervisor of the Year - District 8 Director Georgette Wimbush**

Recently retired District Ten Director Laura Pike was 2016’s winner of the Harold K. Ables award, presented by GJSA to an outstanding worker in the field of Juvenile Justice in Georgia. It is awarded in memory of Harold K. Ables (1931-1968), who contributed to the founding of GJSA, and the award represents the dedicated service and high ideas he held. Ables spent 11 years with the Floyd County Juvenile Court where he served as a Chief Probation Officer and Referee. Ables’ sincere interest and concern for his fellow man was evident from the time spent with the youth of his community and church. He was a strong believer in the worthwhile work done through the juvenile courts in our state. His dedication to the formation of GJSA stemmed from his interest in bringing together those working in the field of juvenile justice in Georgia to study and improve services rendered to the youth of the state.

Congratulations to all of the Department of Juvenile Justice award winners at the 2016 GJSA Training Summit.

To learn more about the Georgia Juvenile Services Association, visit:  
<http://www.gjsa.us/>



**Outstanding Community Worker Award Winner Tammy Droll**

## Vignati Appointed to Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice



Joseph Vignati, Deputy Commissioner of the DJJ Division of Community Services, has been appointed to the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ) by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice. He serves as the primary member for Jurisdiction G, which comprises Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina. Vignati's term began on October 1, 2016, and continues through September 30, 2018, at which time he will be eligible to serve an additional two-year term.

"To be appointed to this elite group is an honor for Joe and for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice and it speaks volumes for what he has accomplished," stated Commissioner Avery D. Niles. "On behalf of all DJJ employees, we are proud and delighted for Joe. He will help convey FACJJ's perspectives on juvenile justice issues to the President, Members of Congress and the OJJDP Administrator."

Reacting to the appointment, Vignati said, "I am humbled to be selected for this role with the Committee and am eager to represent Georgia and other Southeastern states. Members of the FACJJ provide input regarding the concerns of the communities they represent. Local and state leadership is critical when it comes to designing and overseeing long-term juvenile justice reform. I appreciate the opportunity to help shape this important work."

Vignati's first meeting took place September 29-30 in Washington, D.C. The meeting highlighted U.S. Department of Justice and OJJDP initiatives that influence program development and have the potential to change the way the needs of system-involved children and youth are addressed.

According to Administrator Robert L. Listenbee, the work of OJJDP centers on an evidence-based and developmental approach to juvenile justice and delinquency prevention. In his letter confirming the appointment, Administrator Listenbee wrote Vignati, "I look forward to learning more about your experiences addressing the needs of our nation's vulnerable children, youth and families."

### A History of Service

Intimately involved in all aspects of Georgia's juvenile justice system for the past 29 years, Vignati has tirelessly served at-risk youth in a wide variety of roles, both in his career with state government and as a volunteer in community settings. During his tenure with the Governor's Office, he successfully secured \$67 million in federal criminal justice funds for the state of Georgia.







In 2010, Vignati was elected the Coalition for Juvenile Justice's (CJJ) National Juvenile Justice Specialist by his peers in the 56 U.S. states and territories and served a two-year term. The CJJ presented the Tony Gobar Outstanding Juvenile Justice Specialist Award to Vignati in 2011 for his "demonstrated passion and dedication to bettering the juvenile justice system, advocacy for detention alternatives and service as a leader and a voice for juvenile justice specialists from around the nation in his role as the CJJ National Juvenile Justice Specialist. By exemplifying leadership through service, he reminds us all that every child is indeed special."

In 2012, Georgia Governor Nathan Deal issued an official commendation for Vignati, recognizing "his ongoing contributions to the protection and well-being of Georgia's children." In 2015 the Georgia Juvenile Services Association honored Vignati with the Harold K. Ables Award, recognizing his significant contributions to the field.

Vignati currently serves as Co-Chair of the Juvenile Incentive Grant Funding Committee that has helped award over \$20 million in grant funds specifically aimed at reducing unnecessary out-of-home placements of youth appearing before juvenile courts across Georgia.

On May 15, 2015, he was appointed DJJ Deputy Commissioner, responsible for 97 offices providing state juvenile probation and aftercare services across Georgia.

Vignati joined the Georgia Children and Youth Coordinating Council in 2000 and served as the state's Juvenile Justice Specialist until 2014. In 2008, he was named Director of Justice Programs of the newly created Governor's Office for Children and Families in Georgia and served as Administrator of the Office's Justice Division. In 2009, Georgia Governor Sonny Perdue issued an official commendation recognizing him as a great asset to the state.



## Officers Graduate from Classes and Join the Ranks



On September 2, Basic Juvenile Probation Officer Mandate Class #007 and Basic Community Services Training Class #008 graduated from their respective programs at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center.

Basic Juvenile Probation Officer Training (BJPOT) cadets participate in and complete a 360-hour basic training program designed to meet the requirements established by DJJ and the Peace Officer Standards Training (POST) Council for certification of those Juvenile Probation Officers (JPOs) who are assigned to High Intensity Teams (HITS) in the community. Basic Community Services Training (BCST) is a 200-hour course which provides new Juvenile Probation Parole Specialists not assigned to HITS the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their duties in support of the DJJ mission.



Southeast Regional Administrator Jeff Alligood (above) addressed the graduates, drawing upon his 30 years of experience with DJJ. Alligood spoke from the heart when he recalled his many lessons learned on the job with DJJ. “One of the lessons I learned early and often was not to get comfortable in your job. It was during the times of discomfort that I

learned and grew the most individually and professionally.” Alligood also imparted wisdom about using the DJJ “family” for strength – “the power generated from a functioning team was experienced through my personal testimony of the support and encouragement I found from my DJJ family when I was battling cancer.” He also shared his greatest lesson, “if you wish to make a difference in the world then you have to give your love to the world each day.”

In closing, Alligood recalled a quote from Mother Teresa – “I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” He challenged the graduates to cast their stones each and every day. The DJJ family thanks Alligood for his many years of service and wishes him well in his retirement.

Honor graduates included Albert De Los Santos, Alexis Hamilton, Reginald Henry, Shandi Kent, Walter Lunsford, Brittany Martin, Kareem Pollard and the classes’ distinguished honor graduates Garrett McDonald and India Williams.

Congratulations to Basic Juvenile Probation Officer Mandate Class #007 and Basic Community Services Training Class #008!

Fourteen of the BJPOT graduates – HITS Probation Officers – were sworn in by DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles on September 20. During this ceremony the Commissioner granted these officers the authority to carry firearms and arrest power.

The role of the HITS probation officers is to ensure the safety of the citizens of Georgia, while promoting positive reinforcement for our youth. They accomplish these goals by providing individualized and effective services through the use of evidence-based practices.



The officers take an oath to preserve, protect and defend the constitution of the United States of America and the State of Georgia. The HITS officers also recited the Law Enforcement Prayer which is an additional promise to do right by their oath, "I have taken an oath to serve and protect my fellow man. Guide me safely in my duties to do the very best that I can. Give me the ability to stop those things that are wrong and to bring comfort and safety by restoring it to those to whom it belongs." Congratulations to these HITS officers on this accomplishment and for those that are to come.

Basic Juvenile Correctional Officer Class #214 graduated from Basic Juvenile Correctional Officer Training (BJCOT) on September 9. The graduating BJCOT class consisted of 101 Officers from Youth Development Campuses (YDCs) and Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDCs) across the state. Special recognition goes to honor graduates Tiffany Dionne Fraley and Amber Paige, class leader Wayne McCormick and section leaders Anqaneice Lewis and Derek Lunsford.

BJCOT cadets participate in and complete a 240-hour basic program designed to meet the requirements established by DJJ and the POST Council for new Juvenile Correctional Officers and other staff who supervise youth as part of their normal duties in state and private facilities.

Albany RYDC Officer Juan Rozier introduced the special speaker, DJJ Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton. Horton told the class, "You are going to be entrusted with the most vulnerable youth in our state; they are going to need you, they

are going to rely on you. You need to encourage them, you need to push them and you are going to need to assist them."

Following the presentation of certificates, Horton administered the oath of office to the class, stating, "I want you to take this oath seriously and think about what it means; it is all about service, it is about serving our state and serving our country."

DJJ Board Member Willie Bolton and DJJ Chief of Staff Mark Sexton gave closing comments. Bolton advised the class to "Keep in touch with each other; as you rise through the ranks, piggy-back off each other. Nobody can tell your story but you; nobody knows what went on in this class but you all. Life will knock you down but it is up to you to get up."

Sexton congratulated the class on behalf of Commissioner Niles and the DJJ Executive Staff and said, "We could not do this without saying 'thank you' to the family and friends of each graduate who took the time to pull your end of the load over the last six weeks while you have been away. We know you have had a lot invested in their success as well." Sexton added, "The support that you family members are giving them for their success does not stop today, because they are going to have some great days at work and then there are going to be some other days."

Congratulations to Basic Juvenile Correctional Officer Class #214!



# DJJ Staff Make Presentations at American Correctional Association Annual Congress

Founded in 1870 as the National Prison Association, the American Correctional Association (ACA) is the oldest association developed specifically for practitioners in the correctional profession. For nearly 150 years, the ACA has championed the cause of corrections and correctional effectiveness. DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles is a member of the ACA Board of Governors.

The ACA's 146th Congress of Corrections was held August 5-10 in Boston. Several members of the DJJ staff made presentations at the meeting and overviews of those presentations follow.

## Specialized Treatment Units Produce Results

Dr. Christine Doyle, Director of the DJJ Office of Behavioral Health Services, and Ron Koon, Ph.D., Chief of Psychology in the Office, presented "Intensive Treatment of Behavior Disordered Youth in Long-term Secure Facilities."



Christine Doyle, Ph.D.

On any given day in the U.S., over 70,000 youth are held in juvenile detention facilities. Of these, 35 percent report being placed in isolation and 55 percent report that isolation lasted longer than 24 hours. Doyle and Koon report that there are risks associated with juvenile isolation. According to U.S. Department of Justice statistics, over 50 percent of suicides in juvenile facilities occur

in isolation. Isolation also exacerbates mental health conditions and restricts education, causing youth who are often not on grade level to fall even further behind academically. Research also suggests that isolation is associated with increased youth recidivism.

In their presentation, Doyle and Koon provided a contrast between "old assumptions" about how to address behavioral problems of youth in juvenile

correctional facilities and current assumptions that guided the development of DJJ's Specialized Treatment Units (STUs). Past models and methods for behavioral change assumed that many, if not most, youth with severe behavior problems in secure facilities did not have mental health problems. At the heart of the old approach was a belief that negative consequences or punishment would "teach" youth to anticipate consequences of their actions and "motivate" them to make better choices; that a little "lock-down" time never hurt anyone and, if a little lock-down does not work, then more isolation will work better. This approach to juvenile corrections presumes that youth with severe behavioral problems already have the skills needed to control their emotions and behavior, they just choose not to use them.

Doyle and Koon maintain that programs built on the old assumptions did not lead to meaningful behavioral change. Severe youth behavioral problems are: rooted in exposure to trauma; associated with social skill deficiencies; sustained by self-serving distortions in thinking; characterized by delays in socio-moral development; and fueled by anger. They pointed out that juvenile corrections staff are now beginning to understand that juveniles are different than adults in important ways. Compared to adults, juveniles have greater difficulty delaying gratification. Their ability to plan, anticipate consequences, control impulses and manage their emotional responses are not fully developed until they are in their early to mid-20s. Lastly, a juvenile's sense of identity is less stable.



Ron Koon, Ph.D.



## Life-Affirming Practices

Under the leadership of Doyle and Koon, DJJ developed and recently implemented a continuum of intensive treatment programs for youth with severe behavioral disorders housed in long-term secure facilities. The youth (both male and female) have certain shared traits, including a well-established pattern of difficulty engaging in education and treatment programming in less intensive settings. They typically have poor relations with peers; aggressive and disruptive behavior in institutional settings; life histories replete with exposure to violence and other traumatic events; and have significant difficulty with emotional regulation. DJJ's approach for treating these youth is based on current research and an overarching desire to treat youth humanely.

Drs. Doyle and Koon pointed out that most of our youth are doing the best they can to cope with difficult situations with the tools they have. However, they contend that meaningful, positive behavior change does not occur in the absence of a helping relationship.

In Georgia, Governor Nathan Deal signed a sweeping juvenile justice reform bill into law in 2013, which went into effect in 2014. The primary and ongoing goals of the reforms are to reduce the number of repeat juvenile offenders and bring down costs. The reforms also provide judges with more discretion in juvenile case sentencing; offer more drug and mental health counseling; and place more emphasis on local community-based outreach programs rather than commitment to detention centers for non-violent juvenile offenders. In addition, more emphasis is being placed on mental health counseling and innovative ways to help youth with mental health issues.

One innovation generated by the reform is the STUs, which help youth with severe behavioral disorders. An STU is a secure residential treatment unit that provides intensive treatment to youth with designated felony sentences who have had: sustained difficulties engaging in treatment/making progress in treatment; sustained difficulties with peer and/or staff interaction; and a sustained pattern of difficulty with affect regulation.

The two STUs (one for males and one for females) went "on line" in April 2016. There are currently six young men in the STU at the Eastman Youth Development Campus (YDC) and eight young women in the STU at the Macon YDC.

To be admitted to an STU, a youth is referred by his/her treatment team and then evaluated by a psychologist using a rigorous, multi-stage process. Youth are told that they are being considered for the STU and that the STU is a special program to help them develop leadership skills. Interviews are conducted in a group format with experiential activity to provide observational information about a youth's readiness to engage in a therapeutic culture. The STU team selects youth who have significant need, and consideration is given to group composition as the team strives for heterogeneity.

Doyle, Koon and their staff use a group treatment model for the program. It involves a 31-session approach designed for adolescents with anti-social behavioral problems. The focus is on developing social skills, anger control and socio-moral reasoning. Meetings are facilitated by clinical staff to help youth develop skills to help one another. These are mutual help meetings during which youth are coached to help each other think and act responsibly.

(continued on next page)



## Positive Peer Culture and Intensive Staff Training

The meetings also create a positive peer culture because the youth enter the program and move through all the elements together. A week-long orientation consists of a number of team-building experiential activities. The youth work together with staff to develop unit expectations (a consciously planned effort to build the culture). Then mutual help groups reinforce the notion that youth are the best source of help for other youth. Each youth has an "accountability partner" to help keep them on track ("I have your back and you have mine").

The process is reinforced through a positive staff culture; their training explicitly addresses issues of team culture, communication, staff self-care and the institutional climate. All staff involved understand how their interactions with youth and each other impact treatment (for better or worse). Staff at all levels are considered treatment providers and are empowered to be agents of positive change for youth. An emphasis is placed on creating and maintaining a positive therapeutic bond between youth and staff.

The staff involved in the program undergo specialized training before they are assigned to the STU and they receive ongoing supervision/training from behavioral health staff. Training emphasizes the ways that adolescents feel, think and act differently than adults. All staff also understand the importance of understanding the treatment approach so they can model and reinforce skills the youth are learning. Staff also learn about the impact of trauma on development, which then causes different response styles in youth who have experienced trauma.

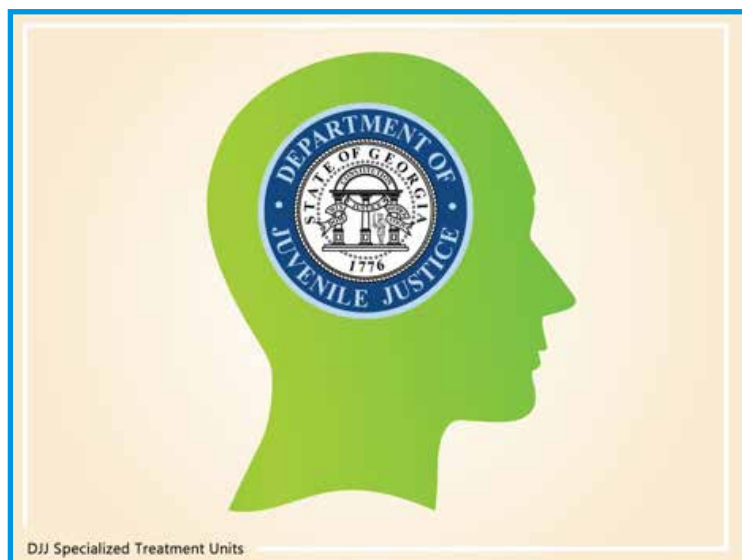
Among the concepts that staff are trained in are: positive engagement strategies; self-care; team communication; and modeling of skills. They also learn to allow room for dialogue and to encourage tough questions and to challenge assumptions. Because there is cross-disciplinary involvement, the various staff members in security, behavioral health, administration, medical, education and maintenance are trained together. This training is followed up with proctoring, on-the-spot supervision and modeling by clinical staff.

While only a few months has elapsed since the STUs were opened, results are encouraging to date. Incidents of self-harm, assault and use of physical intervention techniques have all decreased for both the male and female youth.

A young woman being treated at the STU at the Macon YDC wrote "...Many of our problems had no easy solutions. In the past we tried to ignore them, forget them or make believe they didn't exist. In the STU we challenged ourselves with constructive criticism. We started thinking about the changes we wanted in our lives. We all accepted our limitations, but also started to believe in ourselves and to strive for self-improvement."

She continued, "Now everyone can see a good future for ourselves. Now we can think about our future and what we want to accomplish in life. In STU we learned a variety of skills such as how to solve problems so we would have less pain and how to nurture and care for others. We found out we needed each other's friendship and support. We also learned to tolerate pain until it passed without using drugs or harming ourselves. We really needed to commit to making a better life for ourselves so there would be less pain and more joy."

Her comments are a testimony to the work being done in the STUs and echo what was said by DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles when the Juvenile Justice Reform Act was signed into law: "It's a win to get help for youth who are neglected or abused; it's a win for troubled teens who need community outreach, not detention; and it's a win for Georgia taxpayers who are entitled to protection from felony youth offenders, but who shouldn't have to shoulder high security system costs for low-risk juvenile offenses."



## Sex, Lies and Betrayal: Gang Culture and Sex Trafficking



Latera Davis

The presentation by Latera Davis, LCSW, of the DJJ Office of Victim and Volunteer Services, increased awareness about the impact of sexual exploitation of females within gangs. Criminal street gang culture has generated an increase in domestic sex trafficking, which is exploiting females and supporting related criminal activities.

In 2000, Congress passed the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Under its terms, sex trafficking was defined as “the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for the purposes of a commercial sexual act.” The commercial sexual act is “induced by force, fraud or coercion, in which the person performing such an act has not attained 18 years of age; or the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services by means of force, fraud or coercion.”

As sex trafficking problems increased, Congress passed an updated law – the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2015. Congress mandated “the establishment of child human trafficking victim witness safety, assistance and relocation programs that encourage cooperation with law enforcement investigations of crimes of child human trafficking.” Child human trafficking victims’ services were also mandated.

Congress also mandated “collaborative efforts with child advocacy centers, child welfare agencies, shelters and non-governmental organizations to provide services to victims and encourage cooperation with law enforcement; and the establishment or enhancement of victims’ services programs for victims of child human trafficking.

## Gang-led Sex Trafficking Increases and Threatens Many Young Women

According to the National Gang Threat Assessment of 2009, there are more than 20,000 gangs that are criminally active in the United States. Collectively, those gangs have an estimated one million members. And yet the U.S. Government has prosecuted only just over 200 cases of gang-based commercial sexual exploitation, prostitution or human trafficking. According to the National Human Trafficking Resource Center, 3,598 cases of sex trafficking were reported in 2014 and 973 cases were reported in the first three months of 2015. However, victims frequently do not report victimization because of shame or fear, and thus these numbers are likely underestimated. Approximately 15 percent of respondents to a street gang survey stated that gangs in their jurisdiction engage in human trafficking.

Why has sex trafficking increased in recent years? It is simple – the potential for high profit is evident, while there is a low risk for arrest, prosecution and incarceration. Traffickers prey on children and youth (primarily pre-teen and adolescent girls between 12 and 15 years of age), particularly those: with low self-esteem and/or psychological or emotional problems; with minimal social support; who experience homelessness or are runaways; and those who are in foster care.

Sex traffickers “recruit” in parks and playgrounds; near middle schools and high schools; in foster or group homes; at bus stations, restaurants and truck stops, but also in juvenile courts and detention centers.



Among the challenges to those fighting these problems are: societal misunderstanding of the problem; gang stereotypes; a lack of evidence-based programs and resources; minimal investigative- and prosecutorial-related experience in gang-related trafficking cases; a lack of resources for those rescued from sex trafficking; and a lack of properly trained staff.

## Fighting Gang-led Sex Trafficking

State and local government law enforcement agencies are adding human trafficking to the list of suspected criminal gang activity. Also, gang and human trafficking task forces are working collaboratively to develop community outreach, education and awareness specific to gang-related trafficking.

Georgia agencies involved in assisting those rescued from sex-trafficking (including DJJ) are including a continuum of prevention, victim identification and intervention services; residential treatment and transitional services; short-term safe houses; long-term residential programs; outpatient prevention, at-risk and supportive services; psycho-social interventions that incorporates a trauma-focused approach; and gender-informed interventions.

This effort is a collaborative approach in which the survivor is the center of all decisions concerning recovery and system involvement. The effort focuses on coordinated, survivor-centered care and multi-disciplinary organizations working together to address the medical, legal and mental health needs of survivors.

Those who have been rescued from sexual exploitation may have a difficult time integrating into a “normal” childhood. While Davis and others at DJJ are involved in fighting sex trafficking and helping victims of trafficking, it takes a unified response to solve this complex issue. A survivor of sex trafficking summed up the problem in a very compelling way: “It is not a choice; no one just wakes up and wants to do this. You can’t just walk away...”

### In Your Shoes – Two Georgia Agencies Seek to Reach Youth



Sarah Draper

Sarah Draper, DJJ Deputy Commissioner, facilitated “In Your Shoes: Georgia’s Dual Agency Approach to Reach Youth,” a presentation by Vanessa Hester-O’Donnell and Lisa Tolmich Haughey.

The number of youth supervised by DJJ in its longer-term YDCs is approximately 420.

Of these, 92 percent are males and 8 percent are females. The number of youth supervised by DJJ in regional youth detention centers (RYDCs) is approximately 850; of these 89 percent are males and 11 percent are females. The majority of those in the shorter-term RYDCs are either pre-disposition, awaiting court, post-disposition or awaiting transfer to a YDC or a short-term program.

The Georgia Department of Corrections (DOC) incarcerates adult offenders – 52,000 inmates and has over 11,000 staff. It is the fourth-largest correctional system in the United States, and has the largest per capita number of inmates.

A recent initiative highlighting Georgia’s criminal justice reform is the inter-agency approach to help divert youth from entering the adult prison system. The “In Your Shoes” program assists youth under DJJ supervision achieve better emotional regulation, rational decision-making and behavioral control.

The program was developed by Draper and Brian Owens, a former DOC Commissioner. In Your Shoes is a collaboration between the two departments and pairs youth under DJJ supervision with peer mentors from the DOC adult prison system. The agencies are using proactive measures to reduce the adult offender population while allowing youth to gain as many skills as possible during their incarceration.

While educational and vocational training are effective reentry tools, there was no program to address the cultural perspective among youth of why “criminality” was so desirable. Staff at the two state agencies agreed that the “Scared Straight” tactics of earlier decades were ineffective; however, many of the youth incarcerated at DJJ’s seven YDCs or 19 RYDCs seemed destined to achieve a “badge of courage” distinction awarded when they entered the adult correctional system.

To help ensure the program’s effectiveness, adult inmates were identified who would be committed to the program’s objectives and not use the opportunity for self-promotion. The adult offenders/facilitators had to achieve a certain skill level, demonstrate that they had earned this special program consideration and were responsible to engage with the in-custody youth. The program’s first group of seven males were incarcerated at the Eastman YDC. Danny Horne, DJJ Director of Chaplaincy Services, developed a curriculum to address the desire of male youth to gain notoriety and prominence through gang involvement.



In designing six monthly 90-minute sessions, Horne's approach was faith- and character-based. Offenders were asked to look inward and recognize factors that drove their need for "belonging." The program's mission was "to hold young offenders accountable and responsible for their actions through an intense dialogue with selected DOC inmates."

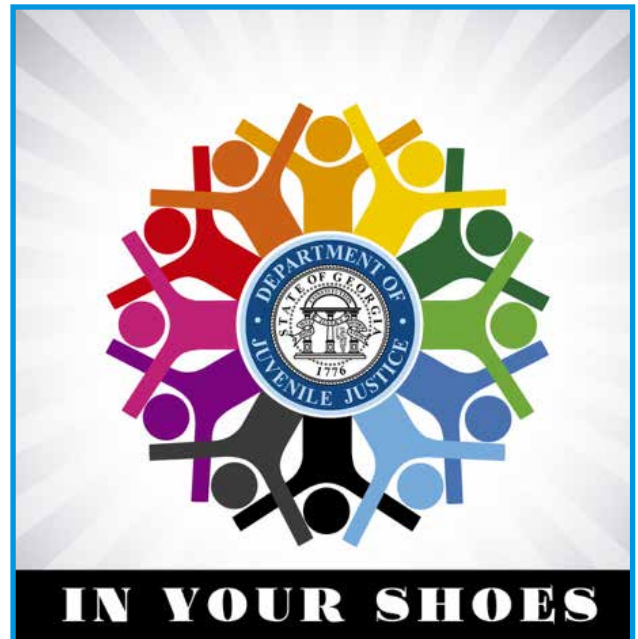
Offender facilitators led the group and between sessions the youth completed required homework assignments such as goal-setting and an action plan for their future. The adult facilitators had completed a minimum level of training acquired through the completion of moral recontation theory (a systematic treatment strategy that seeks to decrease recidivism among juvenile and adult criminal offenders by increasing moral reasoning), Thinking for a Change and a GED or high school diploma. Additionally, they were graduates of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, a program in which offenders can earn a four-year seminary degree.

### In Your Shoes Expanded to Female Youth

The model was then expanded to female offenders and developed with their special needs in mind (gender-responsive, trauma-informed and based in relational theory). In Your Shoes was re-designed and extended to 12 sessions over a one-year period. Women offenders housed at Pulaski State Prison served as mentors to female juvenile offenders housed at the Macon YDC. Once a month the mentors visited the YDC. The mentors and mentees were guided in programming and discussion during each 90-minute session. Topics included "What is Your Character," values, team-building, goal-setting, action plans, stress management and relationships. Mentees were urged to keep journals; to start each class session, journals were discussed and at the end of each class the mentors discussed the lesson of the day and other issues with the YDC participants.

The adult facilitators/mentors were chosen from volunteer female offenders. They had to be disciplinary-free for at least 36 months, have a minimum of a GED and have served at least five years of their sentence. Offenders with longer sentences reflective of serious offenses were most desirable – those who had truly turned their lives around and had a story of discovery and insight into their actions. Most importantly, the offenders had to be recommended by the warden. Dozens of volunteer offenders were interviewed by a DJJ/DOC panel; three were chosen.

The In Your Shoes results to-date are encouraging; 75 percent of the first class of graduates showed an increase in their "stage of development" score. A more complete analysis of each participant's performance in areas such as academic achievement, program participation and overall facility conduct is underway.



Upon completing the program, the youth were interviewed. A 20-year old participant had been admitted to the Macon YDC when she was 17 on charges of aggravated assault and carrying a firearm during the commission of a crime. She has a gang history and family criminality background. Before the program, she had a history of disciplinary reports. However, the inmate mentors worked with her and helped guide her back to more positive behaviors. She has since graduated from high school and hopes to go to college upon release.

Using an inter-agency approach, DJJ and DOC created a program using evidence-based practices. It is hoped that it will reduce youth recidivism rates as well as reduce the number of youth entering the adult system.

The In Your Shoes program will continue; DJJ staff will monitor results and determine whether to expand the program going forward.

# 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of September 11, 2001 - Reminder of the Continuing Need for Vigilance



To mark the 15-year anniversary of the attacks on the United States of America on September 11, 2001, Commissioner Avery D. Niles wrote to the staff: "I am sure we all remember exactly where we were when we learned that the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon were hit by airplanes and about the airplane that crashed in Pennsylvania when passengers heroically kept it from being flown to Washington, D.C."

September 11, 2001 was a dark day in U.S. history. More than 3,000 first responders, police officers, military personnel, firefighters, airline passengers and workers and visitors in the Twin Towers and Pentagon were killed. Others from these same groups – as well as ordinary citizens – showed great heroism to rescue victims and help in many different ways. September 11 also caused an upswing of patriotism and rededication to purpose across our nation.

Each year since 2001 we remember and honor those who paid the ultimate sacrifice that day. In particular, we often think of the first responders who put their lives on the line to save others in the World Trade Center and those who worked in the rubble for months afterward.

## Remnant from WTC Donated to DJJ

After the attacks, the New York Port Authority began taking pieces of the I-beams from the World Trade Center towers and giving them to fire departments and law enforcement agencies around the United States. Remnants of the Twin Towers are on display in public buildings so that people will "Never Forget!"



Assisted by U.S. Representative Doug Collins of Georgia's 9th District, DJJ has acquired a piece of an I-beam. Scott Cagle, Director of DJJ's Office of Planning & Preparedness, has worked closely with Collins and his staff to secure this very important piece of American history for DJJ.

The remnant came from the last large I-beam stored at a Fire Department of New York (FDNY) marine division location at the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The marine division includes FDNY's storied fireboat units. In the aftermath of 9/11, the fireboats anchored offshore lower Manhattan and pumped water to Ground Zero for firefighting purposes because many of the underground pipes that fed water to hydrants (and the hydrants themselves) were destroyed when the Twin Towers collapsed.

In the near future this honored piece of steel will be displayed in the lobby of DJJ's Central Office. Staff members of DJJ are truly honored and humbled to receive such a haunting and significant piece of American history.



U.S. Representative Doug Collins

## Two DJJ Employees Graduate from Performance Management Program

The Georgia Department of Corrections and Columbus State University honored 69 graduates of the Professional Management Program (PMP) in Criminal Justice on August 24th at the State Offices South at Tift College. Among the graduates were two of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice's finest – Special Operations Lieutenant William Belflower and Metro RYDC Associate Director of Security Monique Brandenburg. They completed the 400-hour certification program over the course of two years while maintaining their full-time responsibilities at DJJ.

The Professional Management Program in association with Columbus State University serves as an “advanced school” for public safety personnel, bringing together leaders in corporate and public management to provide public safety officers with intense training in management theory and practice. Belflower found the leadership instruction modules to be exceptionally eye-opening: “I benefited tremendously from these modules. The fact that you had so many different supervisors/managers in your class and each had a different take on how to supervise/manage provided tremendous insight on what they encounter compared to what you encounter. The discussion and class participation/instructor interaction was excellent.”



To participate in the PMP certificate courses, applicants must be nominated by the head of their public safety agency and be accepted by Columbus State University. Brandenburg expressed her initial unease at entering a classroom setting, but also said that “the majority of the classes gave me a better appreciation for the tasks my security staff/management team do, day in and day out.” Brandenburg also found that “leadership is not a one-size-fits-all proposition, and also to be able to lead, you must first know how to follow.”



Both graduates stated that this ceremony was only the beginning of their journey down a path of continuing their education and professional improvement. For Belflower it means completing a plan put aside 20 years ago. “Obtaining this certificate has pushed me to complete my bachelor’s degree... Since completing the certificate program, I have enrolled at Columbus State University and will complete my bachelor’s degree in 2018. Once I earn that I plan to immediately enroll in Command College through Columbus State University.” Brandenburg summed it up by stating, “Graduation was part one of many that are to come... the sky is the limit.”

The DJJ family congratulates Lt. Belflower and Associate Director Brandenburg on this unique and exciting accomplishment!



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“One Team. One Mission.”

