

# THE DJJ Digest

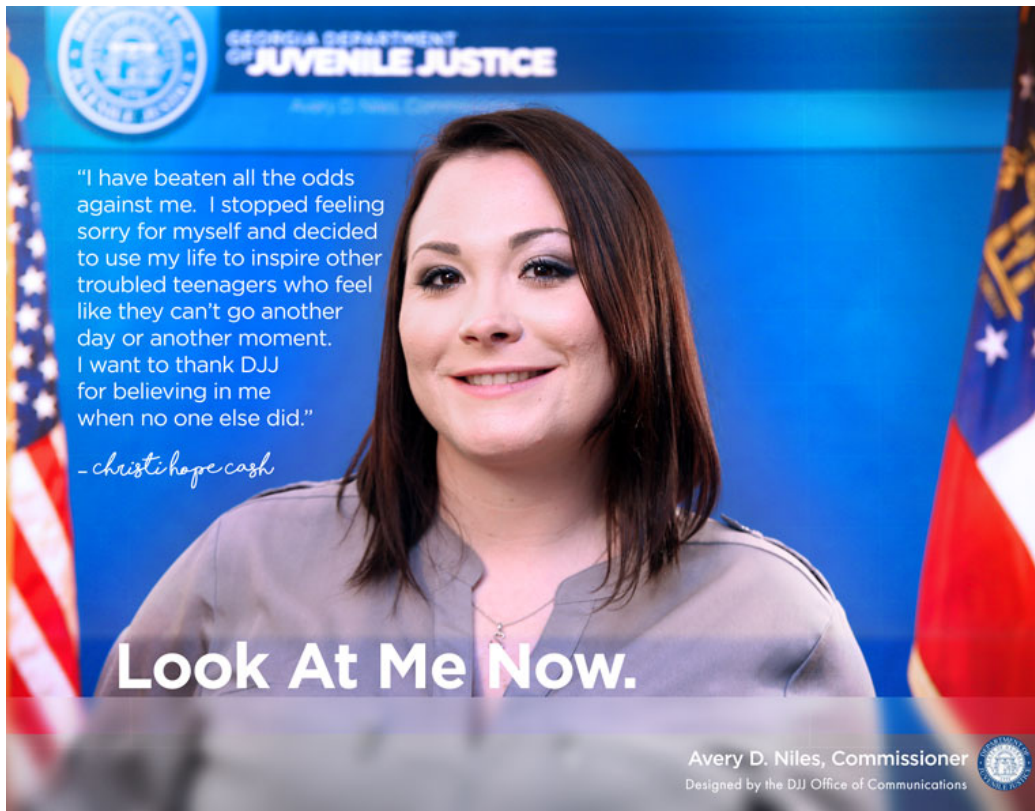
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## Dougherty CSO: Helping Handbags



## Overcoming Abuse & Adversity: Christie Cash Tames Her Childhood Traumas

Seen in this month's newsletter cover photo, Christie Cash was one of four young adults recently honored for their personal success stories by Georgia's Board of Juvenile Justice. Board members listened to Christie's account of life as an abused child and former juvenile offender and they publicly recognized her for the struggles and personal hurdles she overcame. Faced with overwhelming childhood suffering no youth should endure and with no hope for a positive future, Christie Cash said she was an angry, rebellious teenager without loving parental guidance. In and out of foster homes after a series of devastating personal traumas, she was a runaway at age thirteen and committed to the

State of Georgia.

Christie confided to Board members it was through years of love and support from dedicated DJJ leadership and staff that she was finally able to acquire the proper structure and discipline she needed to turn her life around.

*"I honestly felt just hopeless and I want to thank DJJ for believing they can help lost teenagers and for believing in me," Christie told the Board.*

*"They gave me hope and always believed in me when no else did. They taught me about taking responsibility no matter what your age."*

*(Story continued on Page Two)*

Recently, the Dougherty Community Services Office (Dougherty CSO) participated in a community collection drive for the Faith Community Outreach Center - Homeless Shelter for Abused Women and Children in Albany, Georgia. Named Helping Handbags, the collection drive focused on local citizens donating old hand bags or purses filled with hygiene products and distributed to homeless ladies in the region. Among the many items collected were soap, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, deodorant, tooth brushes, hair combs, hair brushes, body spray, wash cloths, shampoo, and conditioner. Donations collected from the Dougherty CSO were delivered to the Faith Community Outreach Center on January 26th.



## Partners in Safety: DJJ and the State Fire Marshal's Office

At the most recent Department of Juvenile Justice Board Meeting, a special partnership was developed between DJJ and the Georgia State Fire Marshal's Office. Office of Planning and Preparedness Director Scott Cagle was deputized by State Fire Marshal, Chief Dwayne Garriss as the Department of Juvenile Justice's official representative for code compliance. The responsibilities of the Fire Marshal's Office include building inspection, manufactured housing inspection, engineering, hazardous materials inspections, and licensing. Director Cagle will be able to review DJJ building plans for code compliance and inspect DJJ structures for the state. Director Cagle also will be working closely with the DJJ Engineering Division to help expedite DJJ building projects while making sure that the Department also complies with all fire and life safety codes for the safety of our youth, employees, and visitors.

Since being named to the Office of Planning and Preparedness, Director Scott Cagle professional background has been an asset to the Department of Juvenile Justice and Georgia citizens. After serving as a Fire Inspector and Fire Marshal in Hall County, Director Cagle was able to retain his state certification as a Georgia Fire Inspector. This, in turn, allowed for the deputizing by the State Fire Marshal and the tax-saving benefit of quicker review of DJJ building plans and required fire inspections of DJJ buildings.

## Overcoming Abuse & Adversity: Christie Cash Tames Her Childhood Traumas (continued)

Board Member Adam Kennedy from Claxton remarked, "You're an inspiration for people in the juvenile justice field. You give us hope to wake up every morning and say there is a reason to go do this job."

### DJJ HONOREE – FORMER OFFENDER SUCCESS STORY

The Board acknowledged Christie and other former DJJ students for facing-down overpowering obstacles in their lives and learning to take advantage of opportunities for personal recovery and community reentry while receiving quality educations and treatment programs at the Department of Juvenile Justice.

The honorees managed to forge the foundations of promising futures while overcoming the kind of extreme life obstacles that unfortunately are all too familiar within the scope of today's juvenile justice perimeters. Drug abuse, molestation, family death and estrangement, interrupted education, and gang affiliation were among the factors challenging these former juvenile offenders' lives, just as they do for many youth held in DJJ secure facilities.

After leaving DJJ custody Christie decided she had to do more changing within herself. "I had to love who I was in order to become someone inspiring." She said four years active duty in the U.S. Army provided her with the next life-changing experience to find self-confidence and self-worth.

**"I stopped feeling sorry for myself and decided I wanted to use my life to inspire other troubled teenagers who feel like they can't go another day or another moment -- To give them that ray of Hope,"** Christie said.

Christie Cash told the Board she was honored to become one of the first American women in combat. She served one tour in Afghanistan as a driver-gunner on scout vehicle missions detonating IEDs to protect army convoys. After that successful stint in the armed service, she is now in the reserves, married, and about to receive her degree in radiology.

**"It's really time to pay love forward, because I have beaten all the odds that were against me,"** Christie said.

Board Member Dick Yarbrough from Atlanta reminded DJJ Staff members about his personal philosophy for leaving the world a better place than you find it. **"You can really feel good about what you've done with these young people. I am so proud to be a part of this,"** Yarbrough said.

Christie Cash and each of the former DJJ students was presented with a 'Successful Youth Award' for their outstanding progress.

Board Member Willie Bolton from Athens told them, **"Sometimes life will knock you down, but it is up to you to get up -- and you got up. You faced life and I'm so proud of you because only the man or the woman in the mirror can make the change. You've done that,"** Bolton said.

DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles assured the Board there is a growing number of former juvenile offenders who are returning to their communities to distinguish themselves with similar stories of academic accomplishment, hard work and perseverance. Many of those young adults have overcome life traumas and learned to develop character, determination and strength during their long journeys toward healing while in custody at the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Commissioner Niles said the DJJ Office of Reentry Services continues to deliver the critical aftercare services needed to support the successful reintegration of Georgia's incarcerated youth back to their communities.

**"The Governor knows the way to institute juvenile justice reforms in Georgia is to change the ability of former young offenders to get a quality education, get a job and successfully reintegrate into their communities,"** Commissioner Niles concluded. **"Then we will see many more success stories like the ones honored today before the Board."**

*Story by the DJJ Digest Team*



SHOWN HERE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Department of Juvenile Justice Board Chair Elaine Snow with Board Honorees Chase Thomas, Carlos Valdez, Shedeedreonna Mallory, Christie Cash, and DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles.

## DJJ Serving Georgia's Most Vulnerable Youth Innovation & Success at GA's Intensive Treatment Unit

January marked a year of innovation and success for the First Anniversary of DJJ's Intensive Treatment Unit (ITU) in Milledgeville, Georgia. The Milledgeville ITU was designed to provide a safe, secure and healthy environment for the most severely behaviorally-challenged youth in Georgia's juvenile justice system by focusing on evidence-based treatment and providing staff with newer and more intensive treatment interventions.

The DJJ goal was to create a state-of-the-art secure treatment facility at the ITU to help eliminate the need for protective isolation in many of its other facilities. Commissioner Avery D. Niles said that even though only a year has passed, the technical security and behavioral treatment aspects of the Milledgeville Intensive Treatment Unit have made it a model facility and educational laboratory for the future of juvenile justice reform in Georgia and the nation.

"When high tech security meets innovative counseling and treatment, positive outcomes mark the results," said



DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles. "I am proud of the dedication and hard work applied by the employees and youth making the Milledgeville ITU's first year a highly productive one."

The ITU is a thirty-bed youth detention center specifically constructed to house severely behaviorally-challenged male offenders from other DJJ facilities across the state with an emphasis on increased professional staffing for counseling and treatment purposes.

Every staff member in the ITU is considered to be a treatment provider, specially trained to engage all youth in positive ways. Compared to standard placements, youth at the Milledgeville ITU receive more enhanced group and individual therapy from qualified mental health professionals than at other DJJ secure facilities.

Commissioner Niles confirms results for the Milledgeville ITU

have been immediate and dramatic. Instructors have observed a 73-percent increase in educational credits earned by ITU students compared with previous placements. There has been a 276-percent increase in the frequency of group treatment and individual treatment sessions compared with previous placements.

(Story continued on Page Four)



## Innovation & Success at GA's Intensive Treatment Unit (continued)

Offenders in the ITU show sustained improvement and have significantly lower rates of youth-on-youth assaults and youth-on-staff assaults when compared to the assault rates for the same time period prior to ITU placement. The highest need DJJ youth whose school performance has improved are enrolled in the ITU Step-Up Program. Step-Up is for students who have demonstrated improved ability to think and act responsibly and behave non-violently.

*"Their whole lives, these kids have been told 'you can't' and 'you won't' and 'you'll never be able to'. But, we at the ITU tell them, 'Of course, you can! Step up and get it done,'"* said ITU Lead Teacher Daniel Sovereign.

Successful Step-Up Program youth should be equipped to behave consistently in a safe, stable, and responsible manner, whether transitioning to general population in less intensive facilities or community housing placements. Once in the program, these youth are expected to participate in mutual help and life skill groups, peer monitoring, and daily living skills including a self-respect curriculum and family counseling sessions.

*"We support them, encourage them*

*when they get frustrated and tell them that we believe that they can. And they do. In school, they're now mostly A and B students,"* Lead Teacher Sovereign said.

The groundwork for the initial success of the Milledgeville ITU can be found in the innovative programming offered and high engagement of these youth. The over-arching goal of the ITU is to keep youth out of a cell and involved in therapeutic programming as much as possible.

A key component to ITU success is the addition of several individual counseling sessions per week in coordination with daily group counseling. Youth programming like 'Structured Psychotherapy for Adolescents Responding to Chronic Stress,' (SPARCS), focus on youth exposed to repeated trauma, and sessions like EQUIP, or 'Equipping Youth to Help One Another' focus on youth with severe antisocial behavior problems.

ITU programs are infused with constant reinforcements for positive outcomes, providing rewards and incentives for youth to do the right thing at the right time. The 'Today-Tomorrow Program' is a unique behavior modification system that closely monitors youth behavior and allows for rapid response

to youth behavior changes. Using the Today-Tomorrow Program, ITU youth are awarded points for achieving goals. The earned points can be used to "purchase" privileges and rewards valued by the youth in custody. By allowing the youth to receive rewards such as playing cards or television and video game time for good behavior, the rewarded behavior can become a natural outcome and result in youth developing personal investments in the ultimate success of both their recovery and the ITU objectives as well.

At the Milledgeville ITU Georgia's Juvenile Justice Reform continues to set the mark as a national standard for dealing with severely behaviorally-challenged youth in the criminal justice system. DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles said, *"We are extremely pleased about our strong youth counseling and programming choices and the successes we have experienced leading to the first anniversary of the Milledgeville ITU facility. We have confidence these accomplishments will carry over to our other facilities and allow us to meet or even exceed our goals for Juvenile Justice Reform in Georgia."*

*Story by the DJJ Digest Team*

# DJJ Employee Recognition Program Highlights Outstanding Staff

Georgia's Juvenile Justice Commissioner Avery D. Niles is pleased to announce the Office of Human Resources (OHR) brought several accomplished staff members before the recent DJJ Board meeting for special acknowledgement. Personnel Analysis Section Manager Harold Cooper endorsed the **DJJ Employee Recognition Program** as one of the Department's special efforts to show appreciation to deserving employees for their commendable performance on the job.

The **DJJ Customer Service Award** was presented to JPPS Star-Jabrea Farrington from the Hall-Dawson County Community Service Office in Gainesville. Mr. Cooper said, "Star truly has a passion for working with youth and she does not know what 5pm checkout means." She is known for singing in the office to bring 'a joyful noise and happiness to the workplace' but also knows when to sit back and listen when a youth needs attention. The nomination for this award says 'Starr has found her calling at DJJ'.

JPPS II **Tonya Hagins** also received recognition for work at the Hall-

Dawson County Community Service Office (CSO). Mrs. Hagins interned in Gainesville for nine months and continued to volunteer at the CSO through the summer until she was hired as a JPPS. Mrs. Hagins was presented the **DJJ Extra Mile Award** for

"for their commitment to the youth and families of the State of Georgia.. and to each other." The award was presented to **Sidney Michael Johnson, Cathy Sells, Donna Anderson-Lowe, Jonathan McMichael, Crystal Teasley, Ryan Phagan, Amber Miller Bryd, Christopher Ayers and Denise Haney** for their team approach to public service and problem solving. District 2 Director Todd Bentley's nomination recognized his team for providing invaluable support for DJJ youth and for their synergistic approach to handling cases, hearings, summits and sharing other important responsibilities.

Mr. Cooper presented the **DJJ Safety Award** to Savannah RYDC control room officer **Luisa Calderon** who was monitoring closed circuit security cameras and defused a potentially volatile situation by simply talking with some unruly youth. Mr. Cooper said Officer Calderon performed above and beyond the regular duties of control room officer, using innovative approaches to protect and ensure the health and safety of DJJ employees and youth in agency care. Her actions were recognized as a great reflection on herself, her shift, her facility and the Department.

Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner Avery D. Niles told Board members she was thankful for the dedication and commitment of all DJJ employees who have a passion to serve the youth and citizens of the State of Georgia.

organizing nature trail after-school programs, community service food pantry projects, and volunteer assignments focused on Hall County's Hispanic population. Her nomination says Mrs. Hagins brings high energy and a loving nature with enthusiasm to see DJJ youth succeed.

The Northeast Region District 2 JPMs were the recipients of the **DJJ Customer Service Team Award**



Savannah RYDC Control Room Officer Luisa Calderon honored with the DJJ Safety Award at the February 2016 Department of Juvenile Justice Board Meeting



Youth at the Sumter YDC participating in the Beat the Streets running program sponsored by the Atlanta Track Club

## Georgia Juvenile Justice and Atlanta Track Club Partner to “Beat the Streets” - Sumter YDC

In continued partnership with the Atlanta Track club and the Mizuno sporting goods company the Department of Juvenile Justice has introduced DJJ’s groundbreaking “Beat the Streets” running program to a second Georgia juvenile facility. Twelve young athletes at the Sumter Youth Development Campus developed an interest in starting up another eleven-week ‘Kilometer Kids’ running challenge and volunteered to participate in the Atlanta Track Club initiative.

Todd Liscomb with the Atlanta Track Club prepared the new Sumter YDC runners with an exciting overview and shared words of encouragement for experiencing the mental, physical, and emotional benefits of staying healthy. Mizuno sporting goods donated new track shoes to ensure participating youth have proper running attire to exercise safely during the Sumter YDC ‘Beat the Streets’ Program.

DJJ Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton challenged Sumter YDC youth to set their

own goals and told the young athletes, “..don’t be afraid to achieve them.” Three MSRT Team Officers and twelve youth participated in several team drills and exercises to kick-off the new initiative. The Sumter youth were happy for the opportunity to be actively engaged as a team to achieve the new ‘Beat the Streets’ program goals, and happy to be sprinting with new sport shoes on their feet. Sumter YDC Director Larry Goodman has hopes the youth and staff will use the new running program to increase their health and wellness together.

# DJJ Team Sets Another Participation Record for Charitable Contributions

The results are in! The Department of Juvenile Justice has once again **exceeded** its own target expectations to set a new record of volunteer participation for its in-house State Charitable Contributions Program

Avery D. Niles challenges the four-thousand-plus dedicated employees at juvenile justice to embrace his personal vision of giving to help restore harmony to Georgia communities disadvantaged by juvenile crime.

volunteer outreach conducted 'With a Servant's Heart'. The Commissioner quoted First Lady Sandra Deal's conviction that, "When we reach out to become involved in helping mold a new beginning for another person,



DJJ Chief Financial Officer Sonja Allen speaks at the State Charitable Contributions Campaign Kickoff

Campaign (SCCP) collections. Department of Juvenile Justice employees have raised a **grand total of \$20,301.61** in donations. The surprise total is accompanied by the highest level of employee fundraising participation since the department-wide SCCP Program was started here. Each year DJJ Commissioner

"While the health, safety, and success of youth in our care is our Number One Priority, it is also important for the DJJ Family to reach out and help our communities become stronger," said Commissioner Niles.

Commissioner Niles said the DJJ Charitable Contributions team is another example of the agency's community involvement and

**we bring hope for that individual and we in turn receive joy."**

*(Story Continued on Page 8)*

(Story Continued from Page 7)

DJJ's imaginative Charitable Contributions Team doesn't rely solely upon traditional online and paper pledges. Instead, these hyperactive campaigners developed and launched a non-stop moneymaking menu of charitable fundraisers ranging from chili cook-offs, and popcorn & gift wrap orders, to sales of popular 'jean passes' that for a small donation, authorize special days for appropriate informal attire in the work place.

Now, more than 182 individual charities are being supported through donations collected by DJJ employees for the SCCP Program.

Commissioner Niles said, "In our "Their dollars and coins have

personalsearchforwaystofixthefabric of broken communities, the annual State Charitable Contributions Program is a means for our staff to reinvest in our neighborhoods with lasting impact. I encourage our staff to reach out 'with a servant's heart' and commit our hands to improving the damaged lives of youth across the state," Niles said.

Perhaps most impressively, more than \$3,100.00 was raised by DJJ's Charitable Contributions Team just by collecting pennies, dimes and quarters in decorated water cooler bottles. The plastic bottles were costumed to resemble animated 'Minions' cartoon characters, starving to be fed spare change.

truly made a huge difference and impact on Georgia charities across the state," said Commissioner Niles. "The success of this campaign shows once again why the Department of Juvenile Justice is more than just a place to work. The dedication and compassion DJJ employees have in their hearts for fellow Georgians does not end when they clock out and leave each day. It's a family -- a family that cares."

For more information about "With a Servant's Heart" please visit <https://gov.georgia.gov/initiatives> or go to <http://nathandeal.org/servantsheart/>.

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**"One Team. One Mission"**