

VOLUNTEERING MATTERS

GAINESVILLE RYDC'S COMMUNITY GARDEN

Gainesville Regional Youth Detention Center (Gainesville RYDC) Director Mr. Charles Hewett has always advocated for youth to learn needed skills that will empower them and help them become successful citizens in their communities. As part of that goal, the Gainesville RYDC has started a community garden to help youth develop organizational abilities while experiencing the joy that comes from the results of successful application.

The Gainesville RYDC continuously strives to provide opportunities for residents that will challenge them to express themselves, to contribute, to take on new roles and be a part of a positive group experience. Through the interaction with supportive adults and peers, youth are more likely to become self-sufficient vested members of their communities upon re-entry. Re-entry back into their communities is one of the top five priorities of Commissioner Mr. Avery Niles and a service learning project such as the Community Garden will provide them with relevant instruction and information that will carry over into their everyday social and decision making skills.

The ability to produce something through hard work and partnering with others will be an experience that adds to life skills and enhances the social skills of Gainesville RYDC youth. Staff, community and youth will benefit from the literal testimony that states that, under the most strained conditions, the opportunity for positive outcomes exists. The pride that comes from seeing someone consume something for nourishment that is produced is priceless. It is hoped that the Gainesville RYDC Community Garden will become a model to be duplicated in other facilities across Georgia.



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SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST

- Girl Scouts & R2R Unites
- PAWS Atlanta & R2R
- Photography at the Macon YDC
- Everybody Wins!!!

BEARS FOR THE CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER

The girls at Metro RYDC had a busy quarter helping to give back to others in the community. On August 17th, they had the opportunity to use their creative side to decorate teddy bear popsicle stick puppets to provide to kids who attend therapy at the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy. Deidra Blalock and Sara Gardner intricately cut dozens of little teddy bear t-shirts, sets of feet and ears in the weeks prior to the session to ensure that the girls could spend as much time as possible decorating the bears. While making the teddy bears, the girls were heard saying “it makes me feel good knowing I’m putting a smile on

someone’s face” and “This is fun. Can we do this more often?”



Bear popsicle sticks for the Georgia Center for Child Advocacy Therapy recipients.



GIRL SCOUTS AND RESCUE 2 RESTORE UNITE



Earlier this year, the dogs for Rescue 2 Restore came to visit Girl Scouts Troop #965 at the Metro RYDC. The scouts were quick to warm to the dogs as they cuddled, pet, and played with them during their time together. By the time that the Rescue 2 Restore session had ended, even those girls who were hesitant to play with the dogs were enjoying the experience.

After playing with the dogs, the scouts paired up to help braid dog toys made from donated t-shirts from the Department of Juvenile Justice staff. The completed toys were then donated to the Ahimsa House, a non-profit that supports the pets of domestic violence victims. These toys were first tested out by the Rescue 2 Restore dogs on hand who were more than happy to give their stamp (or wag!) of approval.



PAWS ATLANTA & RESCUE 2 RESTORE

Rescue 2 Restore is happy to announce a partnership with PAWS Atlanta at the Atlanta Youth Development Campus. The new kennel was opened at the Atlanta YDC on July 30th.

With a few potential program candidates, Rescue 2 Restore met on July 14, 2015. The candidates were all fabulous dogs with some of them adopted fairly quickly with others still awaiting adoption. However, even those dogs who are still waiting to be adopted are able to help the Rescue 2 Restore program through training with the youth handlers at the facility.



“You’ve got me in tears! Thanks for all you do for these pups and kids” - Lisa C. B.

YOUTH AT AUGUSTA YDC READS TO RESCUE 2 RESTORE

In September, the DJJ Rescue 2 Restore program began a reading program in three YDC facilities, modeled after the Reading Education Assistance Dogs (R.E.A.D.) national reading program. The national program, geared toward younger readers, pairs struggling readers with a therapy dog in twice a week sessions where the youth read aloud “to the dog”. The national program boasted a 10% increase in reading skills in only 12 weeks. With such a positive increase in skills, the Rescue 2 Restore staff was convinced that it was definitely something struggling readers should try, and from the results seen so far, it has been GREAT decision to move forward with the program.

Participants at the Macon YDC were tested prior to beginning the program using the San Diego Quick Assessment test. This test measures out of context word recognition with scores reflecting independent reading grade levels. In retesting, after only four weeks of reading sessions with the dogs, two of

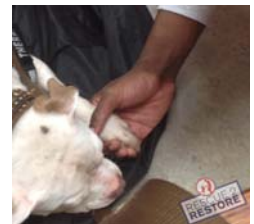
the participants showed gains in their independent reading scores of two complete grade levels!

The Rescue 2 Restore reading program model was tweaked to fit the population of DJJ. Realizing that facility youth would not buy the premise that the dogs were listening to the stories read, it was explained that the dogs were there for the youth, that dogs are known to be calming when humans are anxious and frustrated, and that reading aloud may cause said anxiety which is why the dogs should be present.

The initial results have been encouraging. Both Rescue 2 Restore staff members involved report reading comfort level improvement in all participants. Since the program began, youth come in excited to read and read comfortably with dogs present, increasing each youth’s confidence and fluency. For youth who have lifelong struggles with reading, this new program quietly is changing lives.



In August, the youth at the Augusta Youth- Development Campus participated in the reading program



Reading buddies holding hands at the Intensive Treatment Unit.

THROUGH MY EYES- MACON YDC- AUGUST

Young ladies from Macon YDC participated in the first Through My Eyes program under the direction of Michael Spell, photographer/volunteer and wife, Kelly Spell, Regional Volunteer Coordinator. The girls learned about cameras, photography, lighting and the use of photos as artistic expression during a six week course. The girls took pictures indoors and out and were allowed to choose their favorite to be printed. The girls also completed essays or poems explaining what the picture meant to them. At the end of the course, the girls were treated to a celebration of food and fellowship where their photos and essays/poems were shared. The Macon YDC staff went above and beyond to make the program a success and the girls showed true talent with their beautiful pictures.



WOMEN FROM MT. MIRAH

In July, Latrina Roberson from the Sandersville RYDC spoke to local volunteers from the Mt. Mirah Church in Tennille, Georgia. Learning more about the youth in our facility, women from the church were very much interested in volunteering, engaging in projects, and spending time at the Sandersville RYDC.



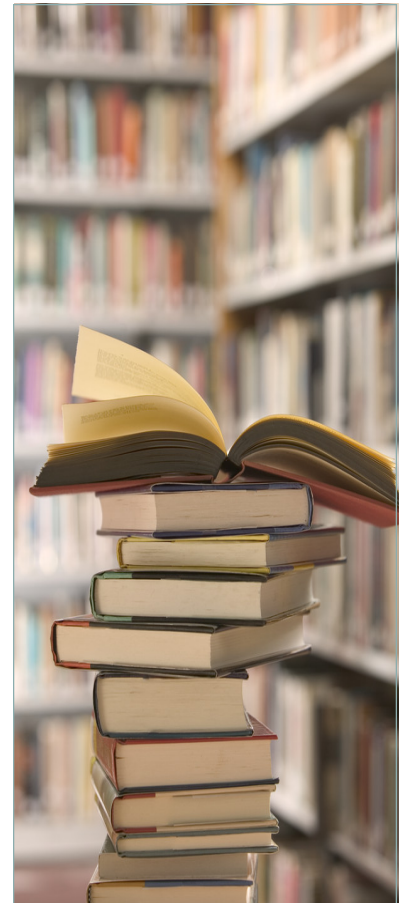
The women of Mt. Mirah

EVERYBODY WINS!!!

As **Everybody Wins! Atlanta** kicks off its 18th year and launches its 12th school; I am thrilled to join this dynamic organization as the new Executive Director. This is a joyful time of year as the heat of summer begins to wane, youth prepare for the start of a new school year and hundreds of students are paired with caring mentors who instill a love of reading!

For 18 years, the Power Lunch literacy program has been delighting the 15,000+ Metro Atlanta students, volunteers, teachers, school administrators, and parents impacted by this shared reading experience. Here's how it works: Power Lunch volunteers are paired with a first through fifth grade student identified by his or her teacher as reading below grade level. Pairs meet once each week during the student's lunchtime and the volunteer reads to the student for 30 minutes (studies show that reading aloud to a child is the best way to improve literacy). Sounds simple, but the mentoring relationship and the reading progress speak for themselves - Power Lunch really is POWERful! Test scores and teacher feedback tells us this program works extremely well, and students tell us they can't wait for Power Lunch each week!

Would your company like to host a recruitment event for a group of employees? Contact Director of Programs, Amy Schlossberg (aschlossberg@everybodywinsatlanta.org or 404-745-2475).



DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

VICTIM, VOLUNTEER, & CHAPLAIN SERVICES

With a strong foundation of active participants, DJJ is grateful to its many volunteers who play a vital role to improve the lives of young offenders in our juvenile facilities and in our communities. The Volunteer Services Program is responsible for the recruitment and screening of prospective volunteers, as well as their orientation and training.

Volunteers with DJJ serve in a variety of capacities in all Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDC), Youth Detention Centers (YDC), and Community Services Offices (CSO), throughout Georgia.

