

# THE DJJ Digest

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## Contents

- GPA Accreditation.....1
- Rockdale RYDC: Project Renewal.....1
- DJJ HR: DOAS Award.....2
- DJJ Graduation.....3
- Law Enforcement Torch Run.....4
- Working Wonders Award.....5
- Emanuel Project Update.....6
- Augusta ETC.....7



### Georgia Preparatory Academy

### Awarded AdvancED Accreditation in 2016

#### Georgia Preparatory Academy Awarded AdvancED Accreditation in 2016

Recently, the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice successfully completed the 'AdvancED' school system accreditation process. Completion of the 2016 'AdvancED' statewide evaluation means DJJ's Georgia Preparatory Academy measures-up with thousands of other accredited school systems around the world that are similarly committed to increase student learning with a focus on future sustainable improvement.

"DJJ earns the distinction of accreditation by AdvancED," Dr. DeMao announced. "This evaluation is a rigorous process. The External Review Team congratulates you on your efforts to improve the quality of your education and you are to be commended."

"I want to extend my congratulations to our Georgia Preparatory Academy Schools," said Commissioner Niles. "The accreditation process is an evaluation of our school district; however the successful completion of this evaluation process represents an agency-wide team effort."

'AdvancED' Lead Evaluator, Dr. Vicki DeMao, announced the successful evaluation results at an external review exit report for the April DJJ Board Meeting.



(Story continued on Page Two)

#### Rockdale RYDC: Project Renewal



The Rockdale Regional Detention Center (Rockdale RYDC) renewed hope this spring with the Project Renewal volunteer collection drive for families. Both the Rockdale RYDC staff and facility youth were proud to participate in this personal item supply drive for the victims of domestic violence. Project Renewal is a Domestic Violence Intervention Program changing lives in Rockdale, Newton, and Walton Counties in Georgia. During the collection drive, over three hundred twenty three items were gathered for donation by the Rockdale RYDC staff. The top three staff members with the most collection items received gift cards for their hard work and effort for the supply drive. As part of the Rockdale RYDC PBIS Program (Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports), participating youth had the chance to make specialized holiday greeting cards for the Project Renewal families. These youth also had the chance to learn more about the great work that Project Renewal is doing in the local community to help eliminate domestic violence and give families a second chance for a positive future.

See Views from the 2016 Spring DJJ Commencement Exercises on Page Three





## DJJ Office of Human Resources: DOAS Human Resources Administration Commissioner's Award

The Department of Juvenile Justice is proud to announce that its Office of Human Resources recently received the coveted Department of Administrative Services (DOAS) Human Resources Administration Commissioner's Award. Recognized as an overall model agency for Georgia, the DJJ Office of Human Resources was honored for its outstanding performance during the FY2016 Human Resources Audit.

The DOAS Award Ceremony was held on March 31st at the Sloppy Floyd Government Center next to the Georgia State Capitol. DJJ Office of Human Resources Director Nadine Crocker was presented the DOAS Human Resources Commissioner's Award by State of Georgia Chief Operations Officer David Werner. Both DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles and DJJ Chief of Staff Mark Sexton were on hand to support the agency and the Office of Human Resources.



The 'AdvancED' accreditation institution was previously known as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, or 'SACS'. A 2006 merger of 'SACS' and the North Central Association Commission on Accreditation and School Improvement (NCA CASI) resulted in the newly formed 'AdvancED' accreditation institution.

The independent Review Teams conducted a 4-day statewide reaccreditation process inspecting Georgia Preparatory Academy schools in DJJ's long-term Youth Development Campuses, short-term DJJ Regional Youth Detention Centers, and DJJ Educational Transition Centers.

As Commissioner and School Superintendent, Commissioner Niles congratulated all DJJ divisions for their teamwork.

"During the site visits we witnessed all our staff working together to ensure we maintained our accreditation," the Commissioner said. "I am proud every division understood the importance of this process and would not settle for anything less than reaccreditation."

'AdvancED' Lead Evaluator, Dr. Vicki DeMao told DJJ Board Members, "You are to be congratulated for taking risks and having people come in here from the outside to evaluate your process -- Having outside eyes to look into the DJJ Education organization."

To get a well-rounded perspective of Georgia Preparatory Academy operations, the inspection teams conducted a total of 129 interviews including eleven School Board Members, 26 school and Central Office administrators, 22 teachers, 14 support personnel, 28 parents and community stakeholders, and 26 students.

Board Chair Elaine Snow told DJJ Education staff, "We appreciate your commitment to the youth, making certain they get the education they need. You truly make a difference in their lives. Excellent Job! We're proud of you!"

DJJ Associate School Superintendent Audrey Armistad said, "I truly understand what the teachers and staff do to make this work. I also appreciate the Board coming in to be a part of this evaluation process."

Review Team site visits focused on 'impact of teaching and learning,' 'education leadership,' and 'school system use of resources'. What the Lead Evaluator reported finding was Georgia Preparatory Academy leadership and staff displaying, "an outstanding level of caring and support for students," and "a high level of communication across the system."

Board Secretary Adam Kennedy congratulated the DJJ Education Team



for a successful reaccreditation effort. "Your hard work has paid off," said Mr. Kennedy. "Thank you for the work you do every day – the teachers at our facilities and everyone from the Central Office Education Division."

Commissioner Niles told Associate School Superintendent Audrey Armistad, "I just want to thank you for your

willingness to pilot this ship and to make the Georgia Preparatory Academy one of the best. There are not many agencies that choose to go through this rigorous process."

As the agency progresses into another year of Georgia Juvenile Justice Reform, DJJ continues to employ and recruit professionally certified, highly qualified and motivated teachers to ensure the Department is operating in compliance with those reforms. It builds positive new learning experiences and provides educational platforms for all youth committed to juvenile secure confinement.

"We will continue to ensure through our work and commitment that we focus on "changing the lives of our youth through quality education," said Commissioner Niles.

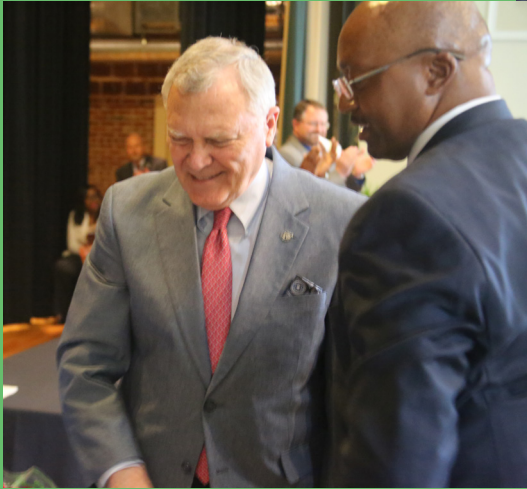
Story by the DJJ Digest Team



# Georgia Preparatory Academy 2016 Spring Commencement

On May 20th, the Georgia Preparatory Academy (GPA) held its Spring Commencement Exercises in Roberts Chapel on the campus of Tift College in Forsyth, Georgia. One of the largest graduation

by the presence of Governor Nathan Deal and his wife, Sandra Deal, who gave the



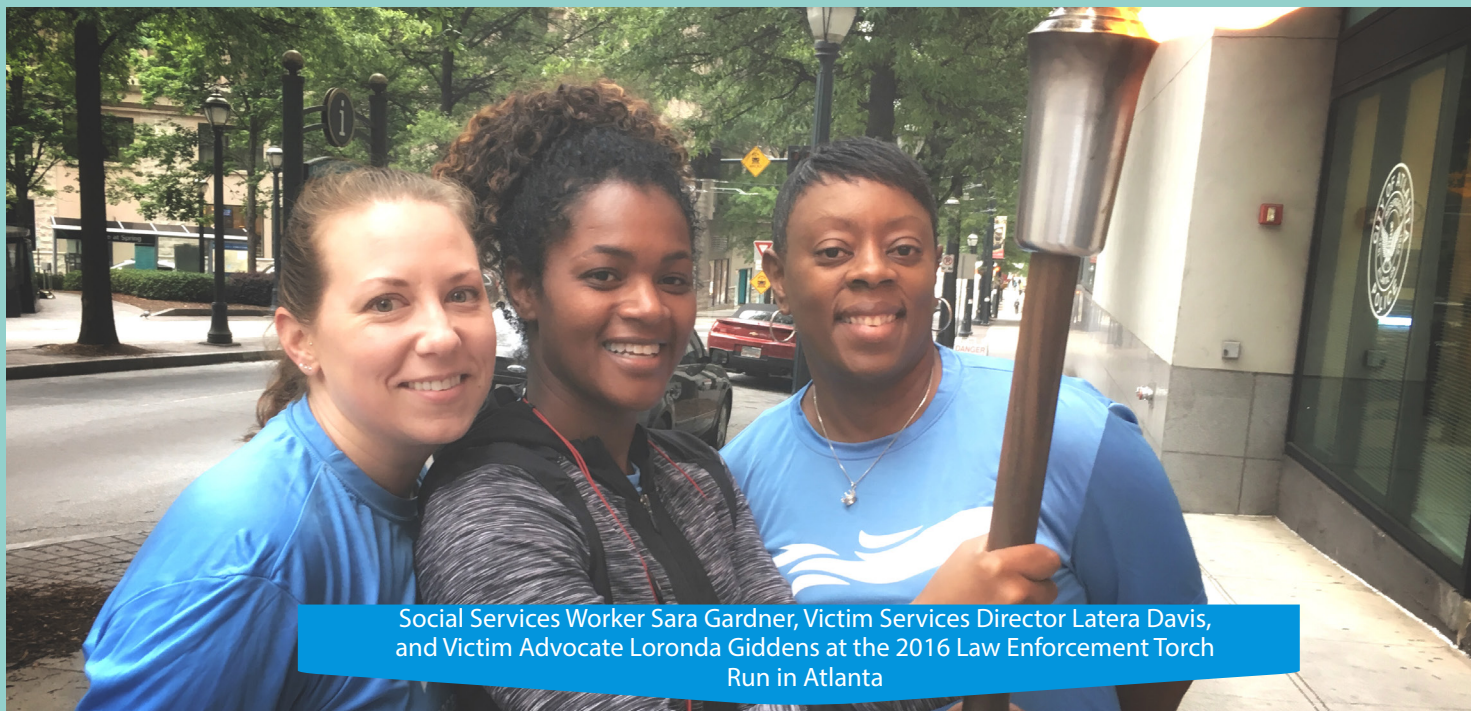
ceremonies held for the Georgia Preparatory Academy, over ninety diplomas were issued and sixty-one youth from across Georgia received diplomas, GEDs, and Technical Certificates of Credit. Among the many facilities honoring graduates included GPA at Atlanta, GPA at Gainesville, GPA at Macon YDC, GPA at Augusta YDC, GPA at Metro RYDC, GPA at Chatham ETC, GPA at Eastman YDC, GPA at Muscogee YDC, and GPA at Sumter

Commencement Speech. VIP attendees from the Department of Juvenile Justice included Commissioner Avery D. Niles, GPA Associate Superintendent of Schools Dr. Audrey R. Armistad, and DJJ Board Member Dr. Thomas L. Coleman. National recording artist Jennifer Cagle performed the National Anthem with Tina Thames also providing a musical selection.



YDC. During the Commencement Ceremony, the graduating youth were joined by a large group of dignitaries, staff, and family members. The Department of Juvenile Justice was honored





Social Services Worker Sara Gardner, Victim Services Director Latera Davis, and Victim Advocate Loronda Giddens at the 2016 Law Enforcement Torch Run in Atlanta

## DJJ and the 2016 Law Enforcement Torch Run

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the largest fundraiser for Special Olympics Georgia. In 2016, more than 8,000 athletes from throughout Georgia will participate in one of the State Games and Competitions conducted by Special Olympics Georgia. For a few days, these children and adults with intellectual disabilities will compete in a high quality sports competition, interact with their peers, and experience new places. Participation in the State Games also means these athletes are focusing

on a goal, learning new skills, and developing healthy habits that may lead to improved overall health.

Funds raised through the Law Enforcement Torch Run help offset the expenses of State Games and are specifically used for facility rental, housing, meals, sport equipment rental and purchase, officials' fees, and medals. Your help is vital to the continuation of Special Olympics Georgia!

The Department of Juvenile Justice is proud of its partnership with the Special Olympics of Georgia for this year's Law Enforcement Torch Run. On



May 20th, DJJ employee supporters and runners came together at Phillips Arena in Atlanta to participate in the final Law Enforcement Torch Run before the start of the 2014 Summer Games held at Emory University. The Phillips Arena to Emory University Torch Run culminated a month's worth of Torch Runs from across Georgia that included the Department of Juvenile Justice in every step. DJJ's Central Office was well represented as

Latera Davis, John Smith, Sara Gardner, and Loronda Giddens all took the time to run for Special Olympics.

In addition, the Whitfield Community Services Office/HITS Team participated in a Northwest Georgia Torch Run on May 18th. DJJ representatives including JPM Marcia Pfister, PO II Albert Hill, PO I Jewel Jackson, JPPS III Amy Hall, JPPS II Amber Hayes, and NW Regional Administrator Renee McClanahan walked,

ran, and rode the approximately nine miles from the Whitfield County line to the Gordon County line. Other highlights included Whitfield County Sheriff Scott Chitwood carrying the torch and a visit to the Valley Point Elementary School where students lined up in the parking lot to greet the Torch Run participants.

*Story by the DJJ Digest Team*

## DJJ and the Working Wonders Day Awards Luncheon: 2016 Spirit of State Use Award

Recently, Georgia Enterprises for Products and Services (GEPS) held its 13th Annual Working Wonders Day Award Luncheon at the Sloppy Floyd Government Building in Atlanta. The Department of Juvenile Justice is proud to announce that Donna Lawrence, AOC II, was presented the 2016 Spirit of State Award.

The Working Wonders Day Awards celebrates five individuals with disabilities who have benefited either from working in the State Use Program or from working for one of GEPS Certified Providers or purchasers of GEPS products or services. Ms. Lawrence was nominated for the Spirit of the State Award by an individual from the GEPS Customer Service Department for her daily exemplary work and customer service.

Georgia Enterprises partners with governmental agencies (state, city, county, and schools) in order to provide high quality services and products. Under the State Use Law (O.C.G.A 50-5-135), Georgia Enterprises is able to provide increased employment

price. Georgia Enterprises and the State Use Law strive for an improved Georgia – cost effective purchasing options that help individuals with disabilities achieve success and empowerment, prove their independence and become contributing members of the local community. To learn



Charles Smith, GEPS State Use Council Chairman; Donna Lawrence, DJJ AOC II, District 1 and Lisa Eason, Deputy Commissioner DOAS

opportunities to Georgians with disabilities. Rehabilitation programs throughout the state employ and train persons with disabilities to produce products and services at a fair market

more about GEPS, visit <http://www.georgiaenterprises.com/>.



## More from the Emanuel Project: Crisp RYDC and Muscogee YDC

The success and excitement of the Department of Juvenile Justice's arts partnership with the Emanuel Project continues to grow and blossom. Recently, the students of the Crisp RYDC and Muscogee YDC took part in designing three-dimensional collages and folk art totem poles as part of an arts installment at the Crisp RYDC main facility. The symbolic nature of the creatures depicted (wolf, owl, and eagle) represent strength, wisdom, and freedom -- important ideas and concepts for the maturation of our youth.

The Emanuel Project is a visual arts program for at risk youth with current concentration on incarcerated youth. The project was initiated in response to the need to engage incarcerated youth between the ages of 12-21 in their curriculum, and to decrease behavioral incidents while increasing their self-esteem. The Emanuel Project takes a multi-dimensional approach to reaching incarcerated youth, through research based curriculum and instruction, incentive programs, art therapy and vocational programs. By utilizing the tools in each of these areas, students, instructors and facilities as a whole benefit.

The installation work at the Crisp RYDC is an important component of the Department of Juvenile Justice's PBIS

program. The behavior of all of the youth who participated was exceptional as punctual attendance and positive attitudes was required. Art truly is a motivational tool for everyone who gets to



experience it.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based, data-driven framework proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety and support improved academic outcomes. More

than 19,000 U.S. schools are implementing PBIS and saving countless instructional hours otherwise lost to discipline. The premise of PBIS is that continual teaching, combined with acknowledgement or

feedback of positive student behavior will reduce unnecessary discipline and promote a climate of greater productivity, safety and learning. PBIS schools apply a multi-tiered approach to prevention, using disciplinary data and principles of behavior analysis to develop school-wide, targeted and individualized interventions and supports to improve school climate for all students.

The Department of Juvenile Justice would like to thank Nora Carter and the rest of the Emanuel Project Team for their hard work and dedication to expanding the visual arts in Georgia. For more information about the Emanuel Project, visit them on the web at [www.emanuelproject.org](http://www.emanuelproject.org).

For details on PBIS at DJJ, click on <http://www.djjnewsandviews.org/pbisatdjj/>.

# Grand Opening of the Augusta Educational Transitional Center

Students expelled from traditional schools around the Augusta area now have another opportunity to learn at an innovative new "Transitional" center. Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner Avery D. Niles is pleased to announce DJJ has opened its third Regional Education Transitional Center to help keep Georgia kids in classrooms.



The Georgia Preparatory Academy developed this new Education Transitional Center concept, called 'ETC' for short, while working on academic advancements for Juvenile Justice Reforms. Richmond County youth who have been suspended or expelled or can no longer pursue their educations in traditional public school settings began attending ETC classes in Augusta.

"At DJJ we realize it is counter-productive to Juvenile Justice Reform when our youth have no way available to earn their high school diploma or GED," said Commissioner Niles. "Under DJJ supervision, the new ETC can provide local youth with opportunities to continue their educations and earn course credits outside of their former public school classrooms."

The Commissioner said the Augusta ETC program now joins the Macon - Bibb County and

Savannah - Chatham County ETC locations - established by DJJ last year to align with Governor Deals' vision to develop a consistent plan of action to reduce juvenile recidivism.

Dr. Audrey Armistad is Associate School Superintendent of the Georgia Preparatory Academy which is dually accredited as the state's 181st school system. The Academy evaluates which young offenders at DJJ have compiled enough credits to obtain a diploma. Dr. Armistad said classroom innovations like DJJ's Education Transitional Centers help meet the modern quality academic needs of expelled Georgia students and will assist them to achieve their educational goals.

Each site will begin by serving up to 20 youth. "Sometimes we will encounter 16 or 17-year-olds who are still reading on a second or third grade level," Dr. Armistad said. "Our challenge is to bring these students back up to where they need to be," Armistad said.

Dr. Armistad emphasized the importance of reaching troubled teens while there is still time. "This will be an awesome opportunity for families in the Augusta area," Armistad said. "Kids in the community who aren't in school will have another opportunity to earn their diplomas or GEDs."

Dr. Armistad said parents, families, schools and communities working together can create meaningful partnerships which ultimately lead to significant cross-the-board gains in student achievement. The official opening of the DJJ Education Transitional Center in Augusta drew positive reactions from Richmond County Juvenile Court Judge Jennifer McKenzie; Toombs Judicial Circuit Court Public Defender Caryn Lobdell; Guardian Ad Litem Jane Dansie, and many other local stakeholders from the 2015 DJJ Augusta Citizens Academy.

"I commend DJJ for the role they play in the lives of the students," said City of Waynesboro Mayor Pauline Jenkins after touring the Center. "The resources that have been put in place for our young people to become productive and responsible citizens will be a great asset for the entire community."

*(Story Continued on Page 8)*



(Story Continued from Page 7)

Chief Assistant Public Defender Sara Meyers at the Toombs Judicial Circuit was excited to see the new ETC program ready to meet the needs of Augusta's troubled youth. "Having an education is a key to success and it is comforting to know that the ETC is providing that education to troubled students that have the desire to get an education," said Meyers. "The leaders there are striving to make this a community effort to lead the students to a bright future."

Several stakeholders shared the view that programs like ETC could be useful to communities with a need to help keep youth with similar education problems from becoming entangled in the juvenile justice system. "I think it can really help these children that we've processed out because when they are not in school they have a tendency to reoffend and this program could reduce that," said Superior Court Chief Judge William Woodrum, Jr.

Chief Judge William Woodrum, Jr. of the Ogeechee Judicial Circuit was impressed with the way Augusta's new Education Transitional Center makes troubled youth place a value on their education.

"The program looks like it is set up to be able to impress upon them that they will need to take some responsibility for their education," Chief Judge Woodrum said. "It can be frustrating to the court to not be able to place the children in an educational setting when they are released and this program provides a good solution to that."

Regional Education Transition Centers will be staffed with current DJJ teachers and housed in local Community Court Services offices throughout Georgia based on areas identified with the most critical needs. Each Regional Education Transition Center will provide:

- An education setting for instruction from highly-qualified DJJ teachers.
- A place and transition period for youth before they reenter public school districts.
- Educational instruction to strengthen cognitive levels in reading and math.
- An alternative educational setting for youth to recover credits needed for diplomas.
- Opportunities for vocational training, career exploratory programs and planning for post-secondary options and employment.

"Don't let this opportunity die," said Commissioner Avery Niles. "Make sure hope happens. We hope to grow it and expand it." Niles said. "There was a void in their lives and now that void can be filled with opportunity."

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## "One Team. One Mission"