

Directions

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MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to protect and serve the citizens of Georgia by holding youthful offenders accountable for their actions through the delivery of treatment services and sanctions in appropriate settings, and by supporting youth in their communities to become productive, law abiding citizens.

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Buckner Sworn In As Commissioner

L. Gale Buckner was sworn in by Governor Nathan Deal as Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice on November 7, 2011.

Buckner came to DJJ from the State Board of Pardons and Paroles, to which she was appointed by former Gov. Sonny Perdue in January 2005. She served as chair of the State Board of Pardons and Paroles from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2010, and as vice chair from July 1, 2006, to June 30, 2008. Prior to joining Pardons and Paroles, Buckner spent five years as the executive director of the Governor's Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. Buckner also served with the Georgia Bureau of Investigation starting in 1981, where she served as assistant special agent-in-charge of the Atlanta field office for death investigations, child abuse, fraud and other criminal activities.

"As a veteran of Georgia's criminal justice community, I am honored and privileged to lead this department, and I am energized by challenges ahead," says Buckner. "I look forward to enhancing DJJ, helping the troubled youth we serve, and ensuring public safety in our communities and facilities."

Buckner currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Georgia International Law Enforcement



DJJ Commissioner L. Gale Buckner with Governor Nathan Deal

Exchange. She is a member of the Association of Paroling Authorities International, the National Criminal Justice Association, the FBI National Academy Associates, the International Association of Women Police, the Parole Association of Georgia, and the Peace Officers Association of Georgia. She received Crisis Responder national certification in 2003 from the National Organization for Victim Assistance.

Buckner earned a bachelor's degree in urban life at Georgia State University and a Master of Public Administration from Brenau University. She is a graduate of the FBI National Academy's 169th Session and was a delegate to Israel in 2003 for the Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange program. She has also served as an adjunct professor, teaching classes in Criminal Justice and Management at Georgia State University, Mercer University and St. Francis University.

Avery Niles Appointed to DJJ Board



Governor Nathan Deal appointed Avery Niles to the Board of Juvenile Justice on October 14, 2011. Niles is the warden of the Hall County Correctional Institution. He previously served as commander of the Hall County Detention Center and is a 23-year veteran of the Hall County Sheriff's Department.

Additionally, He is the third vice president of the Georgia Prison and Warden's Association and a trustee of the Gainesville College Foundation Board. He is a member of the North Georgia Investigator's Association, the National Sheriff's Association, the Georgia Sheriff's Association, the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police and the Peace Officers Association of Georgia.

Niles is a graduate of Leadership Hall County, the Georgia Police Academy, the FBI National Academy and is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in mortuary science. The newest board member serves as a deacon at Antioch Baptist Church. He and his wife, Charlene, have one daughter and reside in Clermont.

Pet Project: Youth and Stray Animals Learn from Each Other at Muscogee YDC

On a sweltering August day in middle Georgia that's more conducive to staying inside and sipping iced tea than any kind of outdoor activity, a group of young men at the Muscogee Youth Development Campus (YDC) are ready to brave the heat. In an out-of-the-way corner of the secure facility in Midland, seven dogs wait in their kennels for the young men who are their trainers and friends. Some of the dogs lie down and pant, others pace back and forth impatiently. Regardless of their disposition, all of the dogs snap to attention when they see the boys.

The young men, ranging from age 14 to 20, each go to a specific cage, open it, put their dog on a leash, and play with them for a while. The youth are part of a program jointly sponsored by Helping Hounds Across Georgia, Inc. and the Harris County Humane Society, which trains stray dogs to make them ready for adoption. Many of the dogs – mostly mixed breeds ranging in age from five months to three-years-old and weighing 35 to 70 pounds – would have a limited life expectancy without intervention.

Muscogee has been involved with this type of program since 2006 and has prepared more than 85 dogs for adoption. DJJ has a dog training program at one other



A Muscogee YDC youth teaches his dog to sit.

facility in Dalton. Only a few other states also offer dog training programs to juvenile offenders.

While the Muscogee dogs, which all come from Harris County, learn commands like sit, stay, and heel, the youth perform a service to the community as well as learn life skills such as discipline, compassion, patience, perseverance, commitment, respect and responsibility that help them in their development and rehabilitation but also throughout their lives.

In addition to attending the two weekly training sessions led by volunteer and long-time dog trainer Steve Shuman, the youth must get up at 6 a.m. to feed and water the dogs, and clean out their pens. They make two more trips each day, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

"This is the only program I know where a young man can put his all out there for something alive," says DJJ Social Service Provider II Patrick Valentine, who oversees the program.

In order to participate in the program, youths must be on gold or platinum card status, meaning they must behave themselves and comply with their education and other program requirements. Sometimes, however, Valentine says, the program is used to give struggling youth an opportunity to find an activity that gives them meaning.

"We give them a chance to find something that gives them a little bit of fun and excitement about life," he says.

Today, the young men and Shuman teach the dogs to sit and heel. Shuman asks the boys take their dogs and line up against the fence. Some of the dogs sit, others try to wander, and still others try to lie down in the shade. Shuman encourages the youths to be patient and keep working with the animals.

"If a dog lies down 10 times, how many times am I going to pull him up?" Shuman asks.

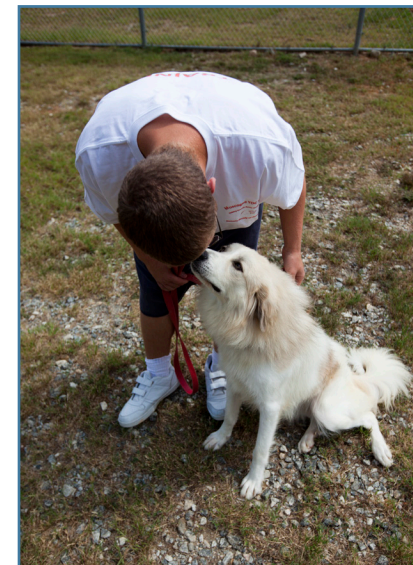
"Ten!" the youth reply in unison.



Steve Shuman shows one of the dog at Muscogee YDC a little affection.

Shuman takes one of the dogs and shows the youths how to make a dog heel. Then he encourages them to try it with their dogs.

"Praise 'em when they're doing right," he tells his volunteer trainers, and they do, petting the dogs and slipping the dogs treats when they follow commands.



A Muscogee YDC youth bonds with the dog he is training. (Photo Courtesy of Rick Ross)

The youth in the program, for their part, are building self-esteem, and learning a little something about second chances. All of the youths agree they wanted to work with the dogs because they love animals, and the work gives them a sense of purpose.

"I like helping the dogs out," says one youth Bryan. "It makes me feel good about myself."

Jawaan, one of the youth in the program, wants to use what he is learning while working with Muscogee's dogs to help train his relatives' dogs when he is released. He said some of his family members have dogs they have talked about getting rid of because they can't control them.

"There isn't a reason to get rid of real good dog if you can teach them," he says.

Both Valentine and Shuman are confident that the youth are taking to heart the lessons they learn while working with the dogs. When he first started working with the youth, the youth didn't talk to him much, Shuman says. But, over time they started opening up, asking questions, and thinking about the future, he notes.

Shuman says the program teaches youth to develop a command presence that's not based on aggression, and allows the youth to learn that showing enthusiasm for something doesn't make them weak.

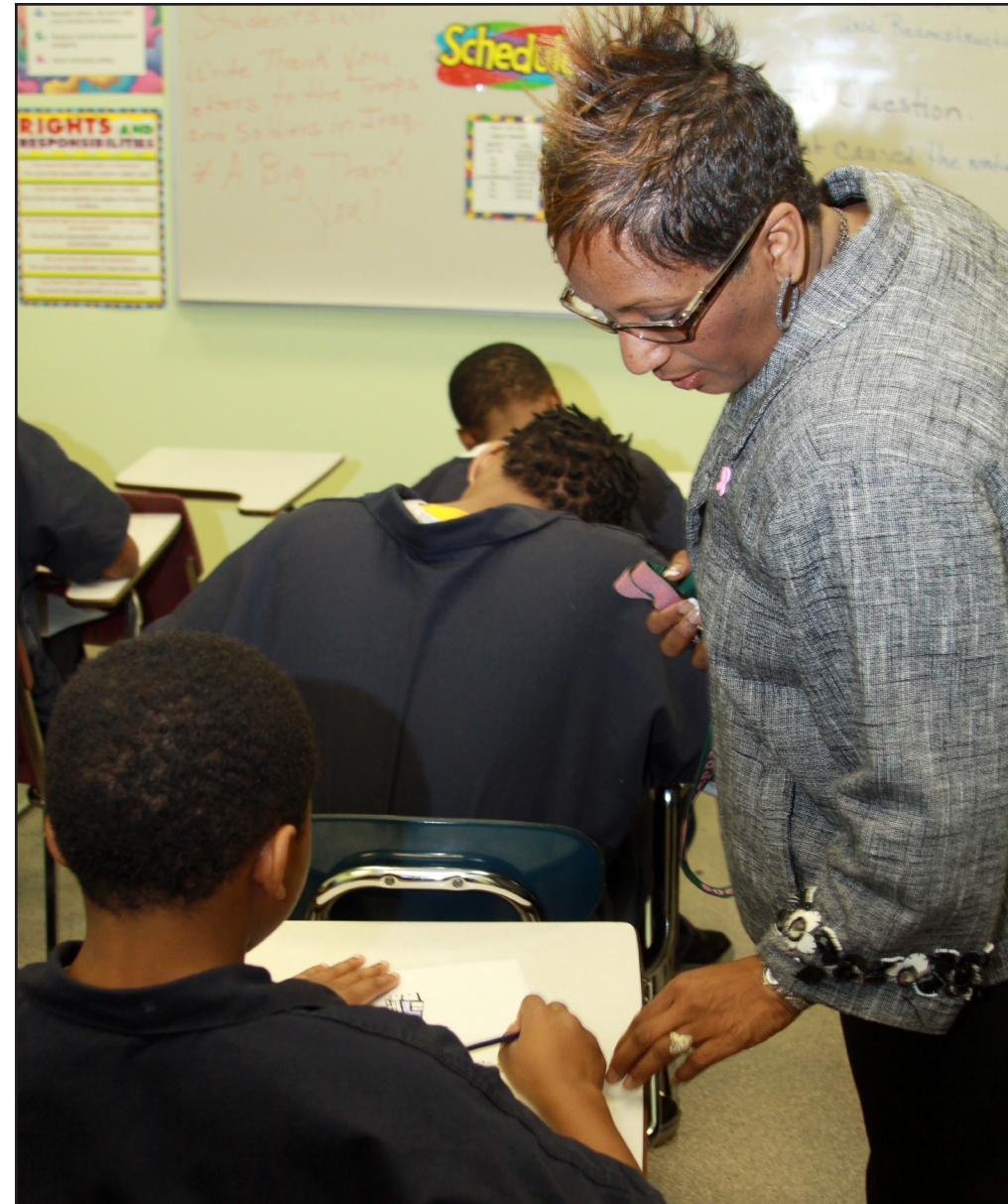
“I do what I do because it’s a calling.”

Even as a child, Letunya Walker made her siblings and cousins play school when they visited their grandmother’s house in Fort Valley. She was always the teacher.

Now, years later, Walker is still the teacher. In fact, this dedicated DJJ employee, who teaches language arts,

the Georgia State Teacher of the Year Contest. The state winner will compete nationally for the honor.

“It’s a great honor I never expected,” Walker says of her recognition. “I do what I do because it’s a calling. The greatest reward is when a student has grasped a concept and the joy expressed from this discovery.”



Walker holds an Ed.D. in Instructional Leadership and has 21 years of experience in teaching and administration. She was recognized for her deep commitment to the teaching profession and DJJ youth; ongoing encouragement to both DJJ youth and professional colleagues; her teaching philosophy and high ethical standards. Walker started her career in the regular public school system. But, it is in the juvenile correctional system, where she has spent the past eight years working with youth, that Walker has found a home.

“I feel my greatest contribution to education has been made in the juvenile system,” says Walker. “These youth are often written off as failures because of their behavior, but I believe it is my responsibility to introduce them to a new way of thinking and processing knowledge.”

Walker says her love of language led her to become a language arts teacher and she relishes the opportunity to give youth who come through her classroom the opportunity to communicate.

“I try to teach to the whole child,” Walker says.

Many of the youth that come through her classroom have not been actively engaged in their own education since

elementary school, Walker says. Getting them to re-engage with learning and put effort into their work can be a challenge, but it is one that she finds rewarding.

“The youth are often very grateful when they accomplish something,” Walker says.

It is that gratitude, Walker adds, that inspires her to keep teaching in juvenile corrections.

Walker’s road to becoming Teacher of the Year was a rocky one, however. Walker joined DJJ in 2003 at the Bill Ireland Youth Development Campus (YDC) in Milledgeville where she rose through the ranks and became acting principal. When that facility closed in 2009, she was facing potential unemployment until she found a position teaching at the Macon YDC. A short six

months later, budget cuts again put her employment with the agency in jeopardy. She landed a job at the DeKalb RYDC but was only there three months before her new position fell victim to yet more budget cuts. That was when she found her current position.

Metro RYDC Principal Bobby Jordan says he is glad that DJJ didn’t end up losing Walker and that he was able to find a place for her at his facility.

“She’s an excellent educator,” Jordan says. “It would have been a shame if we lost her.”

Going through four jobs in less than one year was a trying experience, Walker says, but it made her stronger.

“It brought me to a higher level of faith and dedication to

Teacher of the Year Nominees Shine

While there can only be one teacher of the year, DJJ has many dedicated teachers who work in secure facilities every day to ensure youth continue their education. This year, DJJ had five teacher of the year finalists from all over the state. While Dr. Letunya Walker won, there were four other outstanding nominees.

Math teacher **Eddie Etim** has been with DJJ since 2003, when he started teaching in the after school program at the Bill Ireland Youth Development Campus (YDC). In 2005, he became a full-time teacher at the same facility. He currently works at the Aaron Cohn Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC) in Midland.

Dr. Margaret Grimsley has taught with DJJ for 16 years. Fourteen of those years have been spent teaching health and physical education at the Macon YDC. In June of 2010, she moved to the behavior unit. She currently teaches all subjects and all grade levels within the behavior unit. She is certified in all areas of special education.

Della Hughes began her teaching career in 1993 working with elementary school students. She came to



(Left to right): Board Chairman Dr. Ed Risler, Teacher Eddie Etim, Teacher of the Year Dr. Letunya Walker, Teacher Dr. Margaret Grimsley, Teacher Della Hughes, Commissioner L. Gale Buckner, and Deputy Commissioner Rick Harrison. Not pictured: Charlotte Hall.

work for DJJ at the Augusta YDC in 2005. She teaches high school math and serves as the After School Program On-Site Coordinator.

Charlotte Hall has taught for DJJ since 2001. She has taught at the Savannah River Challenge, and has been the Lead Teacher at the Claxton RYDC since 2003. She has over 12 years of teaching experience

Coming Together: The System of Care Model at Work

In keeping with the 1975 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which requires children to receive an education in the “least restrictive environment,” the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice and other child serving agencies have worked to ensure that children who need mental health services can receive those services while staying in the community. For the last seven years, various public and private agencies in DJJ’s District 1 — a fifteen county area in the northwest corner of the state — have created a foundation for collaboration between agencies that hopefully will serve as a model for other areas in Georgia.

This partnership of DJJ staff, juvenile court judges, and staff from the Division of Family and Children Services, the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, the Department of Public Health, and other partners has forged a ‘System of Care Model’, which is an integrated framework for using the state’s resources to achieve better outcomes for youth with severe mental health issues.

“Everyone has willingly taken off their boss hat and put on their collaboration hat.”- Bartow County Juvenile Court Judge Velma Tilley

Bartow County Chief Juvenile Court Judge Velma Tilley, who serves as judicial co-chair of the System of Care committee, says she has seen a drastic change in the way people think about serving children since the effort began. For example, in the past, budget concerns would lead representatives from different agencies to bicker over who should have responsibility for youths.

“For judges none of that mattered,” Tilley says. “It became a very irritating conversation to have.”

Once the various parties started coming to the table to discuss the problem and work on solutions the bickering stopped as everyone united for a common goal.

“Everyone has willingly taken off their boss hat and put on their collaboration hat,” says Tilley.

The result, according to Tilley, has been an overall cost savings for all agencies involved and services being delivered efficiently.

“There’s money being saved, yet needs are being met,” she says.

DJJ Regional Administrator Margaret Cawood has been



Northwest Regional Administrator Margaret Cawood receives an award for her work in establishing a system of Care model in Northwest Georgia.

instrumental in implementing the System of Care model in Region 1. When the project started in 2003, she came on board in her role as district director, and she has been active ever since, currently serving as administrative co-chair of the System of Care board.

Cawood says that when she heard about the System of Care Model it made sense based on her years of experience working with juveniles. Over time the results have been impressive. Since the System of Care has been implemented, the detention rate in District 1 has been reduced, as have the length of stay, and the recidivism rate.

“We have gradually seen an impact at every point in the system,” Cawood says.

Right now, the System of Care model in Region 1 is funded by a \$9 million grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), but the funding will run out in 2013. Both Tilley and Cawood agree that one big challenge they face is finding ways to keep the system funded.

“What we have to do is blend other dollars, so that we don’t go back to the silo system,” Tilley said.

Cawood and Tilley are also hopeful that their work in Region 1 can be replicated statewide.

“This regional system provides a lot of support to the county level systems,” Cawood said.

Over 100 Receive Recognition for Academic Accomplishments

The close of the winter semester saw a new crop of students further their education. In December, a total of 102 youth earned their high school diplomas, GEDs, technical education certificates, or Work Ready certificates at graduations in DJJ facilities throughout the state.

The Augusta, Eastman, Milan, Sumter and Macon Youth Development Campuses (YDCs) all held graduation ceremonies where youth walked down the aisle to “Pomp and Circumstance” and turned their tassels as family members watched and clapped. Each facility hosted a reception after the ceremony so youth and their family members could celebrate together.

Commissioner L. Gale Buckner delivered remarks at the Augusta graduation, and says she wished her schedule would have allowed her to attend all of the graduation ceremonies.

“I’m proud of all our graduates and what they have accomplished,” Buckner says. “I would encourage all our graduates to continue building on their success, so that when they return to the community they can take advantage of opportunities available to them.”

At each ceremony, graduating youth had the opportunity to speak about how earning a diploma affected them.

“Less than one year ago, graduating from any kind of education program was the farthest thing from my mind and my life plans,” says one youth at the Augusta YDC, who earned a GED while his family, including his one-year-old son

cheered and wiped away tears. I was a 16-year-old seventh grader whose only vision for my future was a long prison sentence. As God would have it, some honorable people in DJJ were in my corner. I thank



Eastman YDC students wait for the December graduation ceremony to begin.

DJJ for making it possible for young people like me to have a second or third chance in life.”

Deputy Commissioner of Programs and Education Services Richard Harrison was glad DJJ was able to end the year on a high note.

“I would like to commend all our graduates,” Harrison says. “They changed a negative into a positive and are on the path to reshaping their life stories.”

Earning a Diploma is Just the Beginning

Two students at the Eastman Youth Development Campus (YDC) have gone above and beyond earning their high school diplomas. Kashon Edwards and Deandre Moore have also worked hard to earn technical certificates of credit from Oconee Fall Line Technical College.

Edwards has earned four of the five certificates offered at Eastman, and Moore has earned all five certificates of credit; certified construction worker, basic auto maintenance/detailing, greenhouse/nursery technician, Microsoft Word application specialist, and auto collision repair assistant.

Edwards received all four of his certificates at the December graduation when he received his high school diploma. The only certificate he has not completed is in auto collision, and he intends to enroll in that class during the next semester.

Edwards has been working on the certificates since 2007 and decided to try all of the available technical certificate programs because he “wanted to be able to do a little bit of everything.”

Ernest Glenn, Edwards father, says he has encouraged his son to take his education seriously is proud of his son’s hard work in earning both his diploma and the technical certificates of credit.

“I’m glad Eastman offered this program for him to excel in.” Glenn says.

Moore, who received his high school diploma in May along with two technical certificates of credit, received the remaining three certificates at the December graduation, says he had decided to make the most of his time at Eastman.

“I’ve got time here. I might as well not let it go to waste,” he says.

Both Edwards and Moore intend to enroll in college once they are released.

DJJ Employees Honored At GJSA Conference



DJJ employees received many honors at the 40th annual Georgia Juvenile Services Association (GJSA) Conference, held in August, in Savannah. The GJSA, founded in 1969, is an educational association for juvenile court workers. In addition to DJJ employees, the organization counts independent juvenile court employees, Division of Family and Childrens Services employees (DFCS), mental health workers among its many members.

DJJ employees who received awards were:

- Associate Superintendent Dr. Jack Catrett, winner of the Harold K. Ables Award for Lifetime Achievement for his years of service and for leading DJJ's school system to dual accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and the Correctional Education Association (CEA).
- Administrative Operations Coordinator I (AOC I) Bonnie Dorminey, winner of the Gail Hilley Memorial Award for going above and beyond in the performance of job duties.
- Waycross Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC) Clerk Marie Deloach, winner Outstanding Worker in a Secure Facility for her dedication to customer service and her attention to detail.
- District Director Jeff Alligood, winner Outstanding Community Supervisor for his dedication to helping youth and his skills as a listener and problem solver.
- Residential Placement Specialist (RPS) Richard Fox, winner Outstanding Community Worker for his dedication to making sure youth receive the services they need.
- And Nijah Coleman, winner of the Phillip Grace Award, given each year to a formerly troubled youth who has turned his or her life around.

Mural Unveiled at Augusta YDC



As part of an ongoing partnership with the Art for Kids Emanuel Project, renowned muralist Emanuel Martinez spent two weeks at the Augusta Youth Development Campus (YDC) helping youth paint a mural on the gymnasium wall. The resulting work of art, entitled "Visualize Your Potential," depicts three different youth contemplating a variety of careers. The mural is meant to send a message of hope to youth who are in the facility, or will come to the facility in the future. This is the fourth such mural that Martinez has helped DJJ youth paint in Georgia. After getting its start at the Muscogee YDC in Midland, GA, the Art For Kids Emanuel Project has branched out into eight states.