

# THE DJJ *Digest*

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Forty-eight students from the Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) Georgia Preparatory Academy (GPA) celebrated their achievements during the winter commencement exercises at Tift College in Forsyth on December 15, 2017. Families, friends, dignitaries and DJJ educators filled Roberts Chapel to honor the graduates receiving high school diplomas, general education development (GED) diplomas, technical certificates of credit (TCCs) and industrial credentials certificates (ICCs) from DJJ Commissioner/Superintendent of Schools Avery D. Niles.



The graduating class was comprised of students from 14 GPAs at the Atlanta, Augusta, Eastman, Macon, Muscogee and Sumter Youth Development Campuses (YDCs); Aaron Cohn (Columbus), Gainesville, Martha K. Glaze (Clayton County), Metro, Rockdale and Savannah Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDCs); and Education Transition Centers (ETCs) in Augusta and Savannah.

Highlights are on the following pages.

## Key Acronyms

BCST - Basic Community Services Training  
BJCOT - Basic Juvenile Correctional Officer Training  
BJPOT - Basic Juvenile Probation Officer Training  
CSO - Community Services Office  
CTAE - Career, Technical and Agricultural Education  
CYC - Commissioner's Youth Council  
DJJ - Department of Juvenile Justice  
DOC - Department of Corrections  
ETC - Education Transition Center  
GED - General Education Development  
GPA - Georgia Preparatory Academy

HITS - High Intensity Team Supervision  
ICC - Industrial Credentials Certificates  
JCO - Juvenile Correctional Officer  
JPM - Juvenile Probation Manager  
JPO - Juvenile Probation Officer  
JPPS - Juvenile Parole Probation Specialist  
MSC - Multi-Service Center  
POST - Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council  
RYDC - Regional Youth Detention Center  
SMRT - Security Management Response Team  
SRO - School Resource Officer  
TCC - Technical Certificate of Credit  
YDC - Youth Development Campus

# DJJ Holds Winter Graduation for the Class of 2017



As the state's 181st school district and a dually accredited institution, GPA is required to hold its students to educational standards that are set by the Georgia Department of Education.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Letunya Walker presided over the ceremony while Kurt Higgins, a graduate from Sumter GPA, gave the Welcome and Tyrone Thorpe, a graduate from Eastman GPA, gave the Invocation. Saketha Butts sang an uplifting musical selection to graduates and guests.

Class Valedictorian Elisha Outler (Chatham ETC) inspired her classmates with her address. "We accomplished one of the many milestones in our lives – high school graduation. It is an act of not only personal commitment, but one of pride," said Outler. "We worked hard to get to this day and our work was not in vain. High school diplomas and GEDs are powerful tools that will open doors of opportunity for those who are dedicated."

Salutatorian Johnnae Wright (Macon GPA) gave the Class Charge. "Our diplomas prove we can do anything we put our minds to and persevere no matter how difficult the journey. I charge this class to change the



Commissioner Niles and graduates applaud parents and family members for staying engaged and remaining committed to their child's education.







Graduation speaker Bennie "Hit-Maker" Foster encouraged graduates to succeed and give back to others.

cycle, rewrite your stories and make the world a little more how God intended," said Wright. "I charge us not to shy away from our problems, but to confront them with confidence. Never be ashamed of your story, because one day your story will inspire somebody else."

Bennie "Hit-Maker" Foster, a long-time community activist and a post-secondary transitional specialist for DeKalb County Schools, served as the keynote speaker. Through volunteerism, philanthropic endeavors and leadership capacities, Foster has dedicated much of his life to mentoring and motivating youth to succeed. He and his wife are also Sony music executives. He imparted words of encouragement for the Class of 2017. "If you are productive with your time, it will pay off. Time is very precious and you all have reached the moment when you get to turn your tassels and officially graduate. You have the world at your fingertips. Most importantly, don't forget to serve others and give back to humanity. That should be your purpose."

Associate Superintendent Jean Lee also addressed the class. "Young men and women of Georgia Preparatory

Academy, I am so incredibly proud of each and every one of you. Don't you ever let anyone diminish what you have accomplished, don't let anyone tell you hard work doesn't matter. Change your life and look beyond a past to a future that is bright," Lee reminded the class. "Remember this, the race is not given to the swift or strong, but those who endure to the end."

The finalists for the 2017 Teacher of the Year were recognized for their hard work and commitment. Harold Farmer, Lead Teacher at Rockdale RYDC, was named Teacher of the Year. Finalists included Tammie Colson (Savannah RYDC), Sandra Marrongelli (Atlanta YDC), Betsy Stone (Aaron Cohn RYDC) and Sam Hicks Queener (Macon YDC).



(l to r) Teacher of the Year Finalist Betsy Stone, DJJ Board member Willie C. Bolton, Finalist Tammie Colson, Assistant Commissioner Joe Vignati, Finalist Sandra Marrongelli, DJJ Board Vice Chair Sandra Heath Taylor, Finalist Sam Hicks Queener, Teacher of the Year Harold Farmer and Assistant Superintendent Dr. Letunya Walker



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Superintendent Niles, Associate Superintendent Lee, the Board of Education, state dignitaries and leadership presented the diplomas to the graduates who overcame many obstacles to receive them.

Superintendent Niles thanked DJJ Board members and all those involved in helping the youth achieve graduation. He also thanked parents and family members for their continuous love and support. In closing, Superintendent Niles told the graduating class “the sky is the limit. Stand for what you believe in, stand on a solid foundation and always do the right thing.”

A number of students were also recognized for completing ACT testing modules for college admission requirements. In addition to earning high school and GED diplomas and TCCs, youth in DJJ custody also have the opportunity to earn college credits.

The Department of Juvenile Justice congratulates the members of the Class of 2017 on their success as they go forth to accomplish their goals and dreams.



Associate Superintendent Jean Lee



## Rockdale RYDC Educator Named DJJ Teacher of the Year; Finalists Hail from DJJ Facilities Throughout the State



Commissioner Niles congratulates Teacher of the Year Harold Farmer.

During winter commencement, DJJ social studies teacher Harold Farmer was named the Georgia Preparatory Academy (GPA) 2017 Teacher of the Year. Commissioner Niles commended Farmer and the finalists for Teacher of the Year for their dedication, perseverance and commitment in pushing students in DJJ secure facilities to succeed.

Farmer, a teacher at Rockdale RYDC, has spent his entire 15-year teaching career with GPA. When asked about his teaching philosophies he stated, "As educators, we must understand what is needed to pull the best out of our students. Activities should be real-world and practical so students can stay engaged and enjoy what they are learning. I want my students to make connections to what is going on now and what took place in history."

He is also credited for starting the "Man Cave," a parental engagement program that aims to strengthen the bonds between youths and the male figures in their lives. "Through planned activities, the Man Cave creates the perfect environment for the students' fatherly figures to share their experiences with the students, stress the importance of education and teach them what it means to act like a man," said Farmer. "The Man Cave is one of our favorite programs. We want to show the students that we care about them and not just academically."





Associate Superintendent Jean Lee, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Letunya Walker, Harold Farmer and Facility Director Wayne Dashields

“Furthermore, education is the key to a brighter future and we as educators are the ones that hand over those keys. To my fellow educators who take on the task of being superheroes in the classrooms and their communities, I say stay encouraged and know the work you do does not go unnoticed,” Farmer said. “Be encouraged that you help shape the world. Our students will be among the leaders of the next generation. Be encouraged that what you are doing in the classroom will influence the young people you serve throughout their lives.”

Commissioner Niles, who also serves as the Superintendent of the DJJ School District, said the task for the selection committee of narrowing down the field of finalists is more difficult each year due to the number of talented educators DJJ has on staff. “We could not fulfill our mission without the countless hours our teachers put forth to give the students the knowledge they need for a bright future.”

Superintendent Niles also recognized the finalists for Teacher of the Year during graduation: Tammie Colson, English-Language Arts teacher at Savannah RYDC; Sandra Marrongelli, English-Language Arts teacher at Atlanta YDC; Sam Hicks Queener, Jr., science teacher at Macon YDC; and Betsy Stone, social studies teacher at Aaron Cohn RYDC.

In her classroom, Colson incorporates hands-on learning activities, discussion-based lessons and offers after-school tutoring to students needing extra

help with reading comprehension. “It is my goal to motivate my students to not only work, but love the idea of learning something new; therefore, creating a life-long learner,” said Colson. “With so many circumstances against them, it is a privilege to get the opportunity to positively impact their lives that, in reality, have only just begun.”



Commissioner Niles and Finalist Tammie Colson



Commissioner Niles and Finalist Sandra Marrongelli



Commissioner Niles and Finalist Sam Hicks Queener, Jr.

Regarding her own educational philosophies, Marrongelli believes education should be relevant, cohesive, student-centered and student-directed. "We must consider our students' individual needs, perspectives, learning styles and goals. We must offer our students options, give them the tools they need to navigate the world and become independent life-long learners," said Marrongelli. "Additionally, if we can model acceptance, respect and understanding to our students, perhaps we will open the door for them to be open-minded, accepting and respectful of others who are different from them."

According to Queener, passion is instrumental in the students' desire to understand and retain knowledge. "I always encourage my students to stay connected to the world. Every student has the ability to learn, but we have to find the key or spark to turn their mind on. I urge my students to ask questions about things they see and hear pertaining to science," he said. "I am passionate about my work because for some of our students, teachers are their last hope of escaping the environment they may have come from." Queener is also a Science Ambassador for the Georgia Department of Education, representing GPA.

Commissioner Niles thanked all GPA teachers – and particularly the Teacher of the Year and the finalists – for their devotion and being positive role models for the youth.





# GPA's Dr. Simone Garwood Selected for CTAE LEAD Class



Dr. Simone Garwood, GPA Business Education Instructor at Atlanta YDC, was selected for the 2017-2018 CTAE LEAD Class.

Dr. Simone Garwood, GPA Business Education Instructor, was recently accepted into the 2017-2018 Career, Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) LEAD class. LEAD stands for Leadership Exploration and Development. Dr. Garwood was one of 20 teachers selected by the CTAE Resource Network, Georgia Association of Career Technical Education (GACTE) and the Georgia Department of Education for this professional learning opportunity.

Participants in the LEAD class will attend five program sessions culminating at the annual GACTE summer conference. Teachers in the program will gain valuable skills in team building, priority management, legislative advocacy and policy, classroom communication and further instruction in incorporating business and economic development in their curriculums.

“The CTAE LEAD class will help with school retention, allow teachers to become more culturally proficient and mindful leaders, increase classroom engagement through hands-on application, further justify the

need for CTAE programming and help students choose from courses they enjoy and can excel in,” said Dr. Garwood.

After spending over a decade teaching in Jamaica, Dr. Garwood immigrated to the United States. She decided she wanted to teach in an untraditional setting and chose GPA to make a difference in the lives of youth in DJJ’s custody. For almost 10 years, Dr. Garwood has taught Introduction to Business, Business Technology as well as the Microsoft Office Certification. Her students also learn how to create budgets and business plans. She currently teaches at the Atlanta YDC.

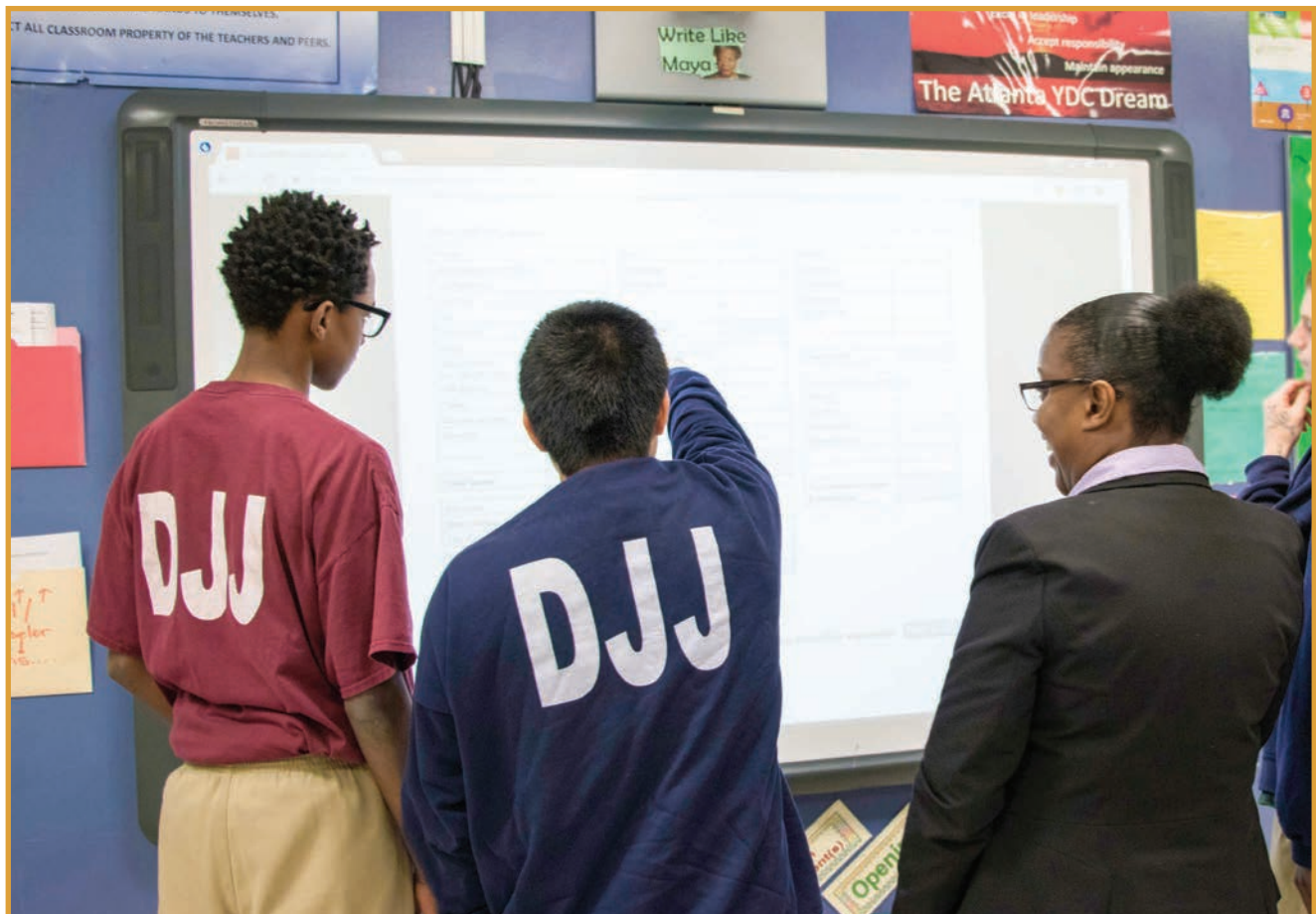




When asked about her teaching philosophies, Dr. Garwood believes in maintaining a positive learning environment and holding her students to high expectations. "Every day, I try to tap into my students' potential and bring out the best in them. I want them to believe they can make a difference in the world. My goal is to have them be life-long learners and productive citizens. My classroom is a living community where my students and I can have open and honest interactions."



"We are so proud of Dr. Garwood for being selected as a member of the Georgia Department of Education's LEAD CTAE leadership program. She has been a dedicated teacher at DJJ for many years and has consistently provided a caring, effective and supportive environment in which our students can learn," said Zane Shelfer, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support. "This program will provide her with additional leadership skills, further enhancing the academic experience for our students and staff."





# DJJ Breaks Ground for Cadwell RYDC



DJJ held groundbreaking ceremonies for what will be its newest facility, Cadwell RYDC, on October 31, 2017. DJJ leadership, staff, dignitaries and members of the community attended the ceremony. The facility will replace the aging Eastman RYDC and will include many updates to better care for young offenders in DJJ’s custody.

Commissioner Avery D. Niles welcomed attendees and thanked the citizens of Cadwell and Laurens County for their support for the new facility. “We are going to offer many services at Cadwell RYDC

that will allow youth to create better outcomes for themselves through educational and vocational programs,” said Commissioner Niles. “This facility will be constructed so it is centered on educational programming.”

The facility is being repurposed from a former Georgia Department of Corrections (DOC) center and once completed, will be a shining example of the state’s commitment to juvenile justice programming and services.



State Representative Matt Hatchett





When it is completed in late 2018, Cadwell RYDC will include 23,000 square feet of dormitory space, 9,300 square feet dedicated to educational and vocational training and a 7,700 square foot gymnasium for recreational activities. The facility will securely accommodate 48 males and eight females.

State Representative Matt Hatchett addressed attendees. "I appreciate the Governor and Commissioner for proceeding with this project. It means a lot to our community and represents progress and development for Laurens County. We are going to give these youth the education, training and opportunity to come back to the community and be successful."

State Senator Larry Walker also spoke during the ceremony. "I appreciate all the hard work that has gone into making this project a reality. This is a big investment by the state in this community," he said. "We are excited about what Cadwell RYDC can do to help young people turn their lives around with the educational and training opportunities that will be available to them."

As part of its mission, DJJ ensures public safety. The RYDC will include security measures such as closed-circuit television (CCTV) surveillance, touch-screen security controls and upgraded perimeter fencing.

Cadwell Mayor Larry Upshaw, Laurens County Sheriff Larry Dean, Juvenile Court Judge Samuel Hilbun, members of the Cadwell City Council, representatives of the Dublin-Laurens Chamber of Commerce and Laurens County Board of Commissioners also attended the groundbreaking.

"We are very grateful to Governor Deal and the General Assembly for continuing to give us the opportunities to make sure all citizens of this great state are taken care of, especially the young people who find themselves on our side of the justice system," said Commissioner Niles. "We want to make sure communities are ready for these youth when they leave our facilities." Commissioner Niles concluded the ceremony by inviting elected officials and dignitaries to help him officially break ground in front of the facility.



Commissioner Niles shakes hands with Laurens County Commissioner Trae Kemp.



State Senator Larry Walker



# DJJ Holds Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony for Wilkes RYDC



On November 14, 2017, DJJ held a ribbon-cutting ceremony for its newest facility, the Wilkes RYDC. State and local dignitaries, DJJ leadership and members of the community attended the ceremony to celebrate the momentous team effort it took in repurposing the former Georgia DOC facility into an RYDC. The new facility replaced the aging Sandersville RYDC.

“We are planning to do good in this area and bring many state jobs to the city of Washington and Wilkes County. I also want to thank Governor Deal and the Georgia General Assembly, who provided the funds necessary to rebuild and rededicate five facilities in the last five and a half years so we can better rehabilitate our youth,” DJJ Commissioner Niles told guests. “Wilkes RYDC is a state-of-the-art facility focused on education, which is so important to our youth.”

DJJ Board Member Willie C. Bolton spoke to attendees and expressed excitement in opening a facility

in his home county. “Georgia is a big state and we do not want to put our youth in a facility far away from their families. This facility is going to keep families intact and our youth close to home. They will be able to re-enter society having had full contact with their families, ministers and those who are going to help them to re-orient their lives. Opening Wilkes RYDC has truly been a team effort. I want to thank everyone who has made this community part of this facility and this facility part of the community.”

Wilkes RYDC securely accommodates up to 40 male and eight female juvenile offenders. It includes 30,000 square feet of dormitory space and a 6,000 square foot gymnasium. In accordance with DJJ’s commitment to education, there are several technology-equipped classrooms and 1,200 square feet designated for vocational education.

Wilkes County Commission Chair Sam Moore, who worked tirelessly to bring the RYDC to Wilkes County,







DJJ Board member Willie C. Bolton



State Senator Lee Anderson

also addressed attendees. “We are all glad to help open a facility we can be proud of. It will be a great fit for our community. We plan on being very involved in juvenile justice and look forward to the jobs and opportunities it will provide for our county.”

State Senator Lee Anderson also expressed his support for the new RYDC. “It is an honor to be here today and I am in full support of this project. I believe it is our solemn duty as a community, state and country to take care of our young people. We must try to make sure these youth turn their lives around so they can be productive citizens.”

Wilkes RYDC incorporates enhanced security measures – CCTV surveillance, touch-screen security controls and upgraded perimeter fencing – helping fulfill DJJ’s mission to ensure public safety.

“This community is so blessed,” stated Washington Mayor Ames Barnett. “We are going to be involved in this facility and support it in any way we can. We are also glad to have a facility where we can affect lives, help change the course for these youths and give them a future.”

Superior Court Judge Britt Hammond and Juvenile Court Judge Jaye Jones, State Representative Trey Rhodes and DJJ Board Member Thomas Coleman also were among the community leaders and elected officials who attended.



Wilkes County Commission Chair Sam Moore

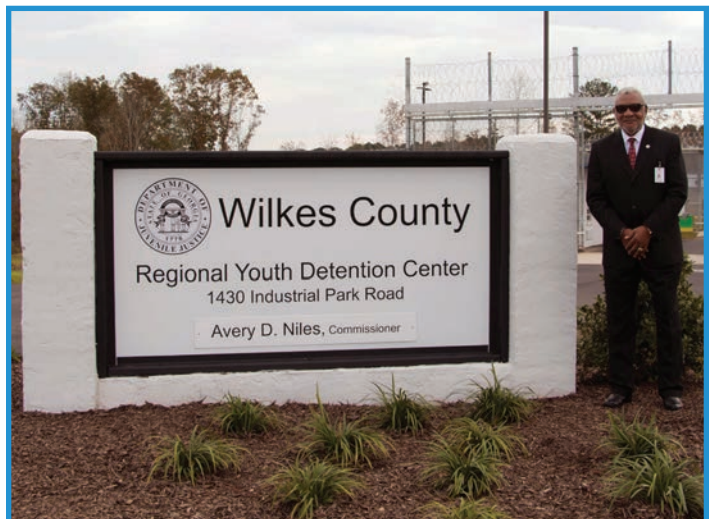


Facility Director Denorio Quinn gives guests a tour of the facility and grounds.

State Representatives Barry Fleming and Tom McCall and former State Senator Bill Jackson (who also worked extremely hard to bring the facility to Wilkes County) were unable to attend, but were commended for their roles in bringing Wilkes RYDC to completion.

Commissioner Niles thanked the many partners who helped design and construct the facility and recognized the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission for its role in overseeing the project. "Regardless of how these youth came to us, the Department of Juvenile Justice will do everything in its power to make sure they leave us better than when they came. With this facility, I challenge everyone to stand strong in helping our youth. Reach at least one of these youth, teach them about the best parts of life. If each one of us reaches one of them, then they will cross the threshold and become productive citizens. Therefore, we will keep them. Each one, reach one, teach one and keep one. And when we keep them, they will reach back and teach one," Commissioner Niles said to end the remarks to those gathered.

The local and state dignitaries, the Commissioner and members of the DJJ team participated in the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Afterward, those in attendance and media were invited to tour the facility. Wilkes RYDC is located at 1430 Industrial Park Road in Washington and is now operational.



DJJ Board member and Wilkes County native Willie C. Bolton poses next to the Wilkes RYDC sign.





# Highlights from the 8th Commissioner's Youth Council



Commissioner Avery D. Niles established the Commissioner's Youth Council (CYC) to give youth incarcerated in YDCs the opportunity to discuss their concerns and opinions directly with decision-makers within DJJ. The 8th CYC was held on October 4, 2017, and attended by 13 youth from YDCs in Atlanta, Augusta, Eastman, Macon, Muscogee and Sumter, their parents, members of the executive staff and the community.

"Everything you say, we look into it, to make things better for y'all. I have nothing to do with how y'all get here, but everything to do with how you leave us," said Commissioner Niles. "This is just a temporary set-back and serving on the CYC is part of the set-up to come back."

Chaplain Danny Horne opened the meeting with the Invocation and An'Quavious Brown, a youth from Eastman YDC, led the audience in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. Commissioner Niles welcomed

guests and introduced the youth to executive staff members. The Commissioner held an hour-long question-and-answer session on topics such as education, expansion of programs, scheduling and uniforms.

Ombudsman Analyst MeShell Dewberry introduced the CYC guest speakers – Global Diagnostics Services, Inc. chief executive officer Marc Upshaw and NBA coach Sam Mitchell. Life-long friends, Upshaw and Mitchell grew up in Columbus and rose above their impoverished circumstances through objective-setting and supporting one another when it came to achieving their goals and dreams.

"I hope you guys are setting goals for yourselves, because this is not the end, this is the beginning," Upshaw told the youth. "Just because you are locked-up physically, does not mean you are locked-up mentally. You have to surround yourself with the right people. As my father told me, 'you cannot run

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with the chickens at night and expect to fly with the eagles during the day.”

Mitchell stressed the importance of self-responsibility to the youth. “At a certain age, you have to take responsibility for yourself. We all make mistakes, but we should not keep making the same mistakes; that is the definition of insanity,” said Mitchell. “Take an interest in yourself and you can be anything you want to be. Find something you love to do that will love you back.”

Commissioner Niles also introduced the CYC members to Carmen Cureton, Director of Construction Services for the Georgia State Financing and Investment Commission. Cureton discussed different career avenues in construction and particularly encouraged the young women to consider careers in construction, an industry where many leadership roles are now held by females.

After the youth participated in male and female break-out sessions, Assistant Commissioner Joe Vignati welcomed parents to the CYC and thanked them for their involvement. Vignati reminded the parents, “This council is a functioning body that brings forth issues your children have and we look to



Guest speaker Marc Upshaw inspires CYC youth.



A youth tells Commissioner Niles and Deputy Commissioner John Pearson her concerns.



Assistant Superintendent of Schools Zane Shelfer confers with a youth.



address. This is important work and I want to congratulate your children for bringing forth ideas to improve our services. It means the world to these youth that you are here today to support them.”

The CYC, held quarterly, is organized by the Office of the Ombudsman, which objectively handles and reviews concerns from youths and their parents. Members of the Ombudsman staff confer with YDC facility directors who are responsible for recommending youth for the Council. To serve on the CYC, a youth must be at least 15 years of age, may not have a release date within six months of the meeting and must display leadership qualities. Furthermore, CYC members must show they are working to achieve their educational goals and maintain participation in the behavioral management program. Selected youth are required to meet with their peers before the meeting to gather questions and concerns and to share findings and insights after the CYC meets. The CYC not only allows youth to voice their issues and concerns, but teaches them communication skills, leadership and is meant to increase their self-confidence.

At the close of the meeting, Commissioner Niles asked the youth to continue to voice their opinions and to do the right thing. “Things may not happen overnight, but a lot of these topics you all bring up, trust and believe that they will be answered. We cannot do our jobs and ensure the success of this agency without your input, which is why we take the time to listen,” he said. Later that day, the Commissioner met with Governor Nathan Deal to discuss college scholarships for the youth, a topic that was discussed at the prior CYC.



Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton and DJJ Ombudsman Herman Archie present each youth with a certificate of participation.



CYC members pose for a photograph with staff from the Office of the Ombudsman.

# Marc Upshaw and Sam Mitchell Inspire CYC Members



Marc Upshaw, co-founder of the SaMarc Dream and Achieve Foundation, speaks to the youth on the importance of getting an education.

As teenagers growing up in a poverty-stricken neighborhood in Columbus, Marc Upshaw and Sam Mitchell promised each other they would chase dreams and not the pitfalls that landed many of their peers in prison. The pair also promised each other that if they became successful, they would give back to children in their hometown.

In 2004, after achieving success in their careers, Upshaw and Mitchell made good on their promise. They established the SaMarc Dream and Achieve Foundation and hosted their first annual basketball camp at no cost for 200 boys and girls in Columbus. The purpose of the summer camp is to not only teach the fundamentals of basketball but also to encourage the youth to dream and set goals for themselves. Successful professionals, entrepreneurs and athletes also are invited to speak and meet with the campers. The mission of the SaMarc Dream and Achieve Foundation is to “transform and enlighten the lives of our campers by instilling in them the desire to strive for all the best that life has to offer.”

Through their foundation, Upshaw and Mitchell have also taken groups of children on educational trips to Washington, D.C., the NASA Space Center and New York City.

Upshaw and Mitchell attended the October CYC to tell the members of the Council – as well as all those present – of the obstacles they faced on their roads to success. In high school, star basketball player Upshaw befriended Mitchell and encouraged him to try out for the team. Once Mitchell made the team, the two remained focused on excelling in the sport. Upshaw and Mitchell went on to play for the University of Rhode Island and Mercer University respectively. They maintained their friendship and encouraged each other to never give up on their dreams despite the obstacles that stood in the way.

“I didn’t learn how to dream until I started hanging with Marc. I had no other positive influences in my life. I was always angry and getting into fights. Today, I set goals for myself. He taught me that. Today, I do



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the right thing for personal satisfaction – it validates who I am,” Mitchell told the youth. “Everybody, including me, has a tough story. But if I managed to become successful in life, then anyone can,” Mitchell continued. “Remember you can be anything you want to be if you apply yourself. If you believe in you, and you know you’re not going to let yourself down, then how can you not be anything but successful?”

Mitchell explained to the youths that it took him several years, numerous try-outs, being cut by several teams and playing semi-pro basketball before he joined the NBA. Mitchell went on to play for the Indiana Pacers and the Minnesota Timberwolves for 13 years. He then enjoyed a successful coaching career, and as the head coach for the Toronto Raptors, was named NBA Coach of the Year in 2007. Mitchell also coached for the Minnesota Timberwolves and is currently the head coach for the U.S. Virgin Islands national basketball team.

“We decided to be leaders, to go to school and take our education seriously. It took me 23 years to build my company, just as you are building your lives,” said Upshaw. “You have to take hold of your life and understand that education is the key to success.”

After graduating from Columbus High School, Upshaw earned a scholarship as a four-year student-athlete at the University of Rhode Island. Several NBA teams, including the Boston Celtics and

the Philadelphia 76ers, pursued him heavily. While a knee injury ended a life-long dream to play in the NBA, it ultimately led to other opportunities.

After a successful early career with a major health insurance agency and his own agency, Upshaw decided to move to Atlanta and pursue his goal of entering the medical field. He was given an opportunity to work with a major occupational medicine clinic as a sales/marketing representative.

Upshaw then saw an opportunity that would be beneficial for both physicians as well as their patients. Upshaw founded Global Diagnostic Services, Inc. (GDS) in 1994 to fill an industry need in providing medical diagnostic services to correctional facilities, nursing homes and other sites. The GDS mission is to provide comprehensive on-site medical diagnostic testing and medical staffing to its clients in the most efficient, cost-effective and professional manner possible. Today, Upshaw’s company has more than 125 employees in multiple locations throughout the U.S. He credits his success to risk-taking, faith, resilience and the dedication of his employees. He believes in the adage, “To whom much is given, much is required.”

Commissioner Niles thanked Upshaw and Mitchell for their commitment to helping youth achieve their dreams and presented them with Commissioner’s Coins for their efforts and volunteerism.



Marc Upshaw, Commissioner Avery D. Niles, Sam Mitchell and DJJ Ombudsman Herman Archie

# Candler School of Theology Students Minister Youth at Metro RYDC



The mission of DJJ's Chaplaincy Services is to support the agency by ensuring First Amendment rights to religious worship and providing pastoral care to youth and staff through spiritual guidance, counselling and support, education and crisis intervention. In furthering this mission, DJJ has partnered with Emory University's Candler School of Theology to give its graduate students the opportunity to complete their Contextual Education I site work. Contextual education is the heart of Candler's curriculum and is designed to allow Masters'-level students to integrate their theological training with pastoral care and service in a social service setting.

In August, Candler's third chaplaincy intern class began its site work at Metro RYDC. Seven interns have committed to ministering DJJ youth through games and activities, listening, prayer and thoughtful discussions each Thursday. Those afternoons begin in the intake area. As youth are being processed into the facility, the interns lighten the mood through friendly chatting and playing fun card games like "Spades" and "Crazy Eights." According to chaplaincy intern Brody Scott, "It's been a gift to get to have a presence there, because kids in intake are in a period of major transition; transitions which are inevitably paired with a great deal of stress and uncertainty."

Youth who choose to sign-up then participate in group sessions held each week in the library. The interns take turns leading the group sessions. "We have prayerfully thought about topics which matter to the youth. We came up with a variety of lessons – each led by a different chaplain intern – centered around common themes of the self and relationships with God and others," said Sam Vernhes, also a chaplaincy intern. "We've also stressed the 'Group Promise,' which we've written together with the youth. It stresses our collective commitment to the values of respect, honesty, love and fun."



While group session activities vary week-to-week, youth can count on doing character-building exercises, discussing scriptures and participating in small group break-out sessions. "We want to offer youth a space where they can support one another. They're yearning for conversations about their hopes and dreams, their fears and failures, as well as their faith. Their passions are deeply evident each week," added Jad Taylor, another intern. "Like all teenagers, they enjoy the opportunities to laugh and have fun together. The youth at Metro RYDC teach us what hope, resilience and vulnerability look like in the face of great challenges."



The chaplaincy intern class will continue to minister the youth until the end of the academic year. "Whatever may have brought us together in the space we are at, my friends at Metro are striving to be defined as something beyond that. I'm captivated by glimpses of wonderful futures that come to life in that room, where their 'walls' are let down and the kids are just allowed to be themselves," added Scott.

The Candler School of Theology established its partnership with DJJ in Fall 2015 under the direction of DJJ Chaplaincy Services Director Danny Horne, who continues to serve as site supervisor. Chaplain Horne,

a Candler graduate himself, had full confidence that the students in the Contextual Education I program would provide exceptional pastoral care for the youth. DJJ looks forward to continuing to work with the Candler School of Theology and is thankful for the dedication of its students and the impact they made on the youth.



Rev. Danny Horne (left) and members of the Candler School of Theology 2017-2018 intern class



# DJJ Holds Graduation for BJCOT Class #222



DJJ held graduation exercises for Basic Juvenile Correctional Officer Training (BJCOT) Class 222 at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center on October 27, 2017. After completing 240 hours of written, practical and physical training, 58 cadets were sworn-in as juvenile correctional officers (JCOs) in front of family, friends and DJJ staff members. Class 222 chose as their motto “guide the misguided with dignity and respect.”

The DJJ Color Guard presented the Colors followed by the National Anthem. Lt. Rudolph Oliver (Martha K. Glaze RYDC) gave the Invocation; Veverly Pinkney-Lee (Sumter YDC) welcomed guests to the ceremony; DJJ Director of Planning and Preparedness Scott Cagle delivered the greeting; and Shaneque Kemp (Metro RYDC) introduced the graduation speaker, Sean Hamilton, Deputy Commissioner of Secure Detention.

Hamilton has dedicated his career to social services and juvenile justice. In his address, he reminded the officers that each youth has his or her own story and





often the circumstances of their confinement are not solely their fault. "Remember to be firm, fair, consistent, patient and maintain healthy boundaries. Don't give up on these youth. Do everything in your power to reach them. You might be the only adult they can depend on. Broken children often become broken adults. The cycle repeats itself unless you become that one person that allows and encourages them to change."

Public Safety Training Instructor Kimberly Blount presented class awards and recognized Section and Class Leaders. Shjrelle Cline (Metro RYDC) earned the Highest Academic Achievement Award; the Look Sharp Award was given to Oliver Rudolph (Martha K. Glaze RYDC); Delonzo Harris (Augusta YDC) received the One Team Spirit Award; Rosemary Colon (Gainesville RYDC) and Daymen Williams (DeKalb RYDC) earned the Physical Fitness Award; and Tynesheia Gresham (Gainesville RYDC) was presented with the Leadership Award. Rosemary Colon and Francisco Hernandez-Erazo (Gainesville RYDC) served as Section Leaders. LaDarius Hall (Loftiss RYDC) and Tynesheia Gresham served as Class Leaders. Public Safety Training Instructor Jason Kovarovic presented the certificates and Training Academy Director DeBaja Coleman administered the Oath of Office.

Shjrelle Cline was elected by her classmates to give the Class Comments. "Today is a special day as our new journey begins. I am proud to say we did it. We made it through six demanding weeks. This journey has been hard, but it was well worth it. We would like to thank Ms. Coleman and all of our instructors and I would personally like to thank my classmates."

Assistant Commissioner Joe Vignati delivered the Closing Comments. "This whole class is connected to something more than just a job. You are helping children change their lives and therefore changing the world. When times get hard, lean on everybody that is here today. I salute you and am proud of you." Chaplain Danny Horne gave the Benediction followed by the Recessional.



Deputy Commissioner Sean Hamilton



Assistant Commissioner Joe Vignati congratulates a graduate.



Academy Director DeBaja Coleman presents the class plaque.

## Congratulations to the Graduates of BJCOT Class #222:

Miranda Belcher – Loftiss RYDC  
Thomas Borden – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Shabreka Bridges – Terrell County RYDC  
Meagan Caldwell – Augusta YDC  
Amanda Carpenter – Savannah RYDC  
Kenyatta Carswell – Milledgeville YDC  
\*\*\*Shjrelle Cline – Metro RYDC  
Latoya Cole – Terrell County RYDC  
Rosemary Colon – Gainesville RYDC\*  
Marcus Daniels – DeKalb RYDC  
Johnathan Davis – Augusta RYDC  
Enricco Feys – Augusta RYDC  
David Fisher, Jr. – Wilkes RYDC  
Adrian Fleming – Sumter YDC  
Christopher George – Terrell County RYDC  
Quintavious George – Aaron Cohn RYDC  
\*\*Tynesheia Gresham – Gainesville RYDC  
\*\*LaDarius Hall – Loftiss RYDC  
Mechaela Hall – Milledgeville YDC  
Antonio Harris – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Delonzo Harris – Augusta YDC  
\*Francisco Hernandez-Erazo – Gainesville RYDC  
Morgan Hicks – Eastman RYDC  
Naomia Jones – Waycross RYDC  
Destenee Josey – Sumter YDC  
Shaneque Kemp – Metro RYDC  
Olympia Knight – Augusta YDC  
Karl Kupfer – Marietta RYDC  
Lorenzo Levine – Marietta RYDC  
Kenyarta Lovett – Sumter YDC  
Jamal Lyles – Sumter YDC  
Derek McClendon, Jr. – Augusta YDC

Madison McMillian – Eastman YDC  
La'Toya Miller – Savannah RYDC  
Quenton Moses – Metro RYDC  
Rudolph Oliver – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Veverly Pinkney-Lee – Sumter YDC  
Aneisha Pittman – Augusta RYDC  
Thomara Powell – Loftiss RYDC  
Travian Roberson – Augusta RYDC  
Dalton Rogers – Eastman YDC  
Tashyna Rogers – Atlanta YDC  
Ashley Sheffield – Eastman YDC  
Jennifer Simmons – Crisp RYDC  
Keiaja Simmons – Milledgeville YDC  
Destinee Trigger – Marietta RYDC  
Letitia Wadley – Eastman YDC  
Lil Michelle Walker – Crisp RYDC  
LaQuisha Ward – Security Management and Response Teams (SMRT)  
Shiracyel Washington – Augusta YDC  
Shaneika Watkins – Eastman YDC  
Nathaniel Watson, Jr. – Terrell County RYDC  
Yolanda Wesley – Terrell County RYDC  
Daymen Williams – DeKalb RYDC  
Odell Williams, Jr. – Atlanta YDC  
Nicholas Wright – SMRT  
Thommesha Wright – Metro RYDC  
Lavonna Wynn-Harper – Gainesville RYDC

\*Section Leader

\*\*Class Leader

\*\*\*Distinguished Honor Graduate



Deputy Commissioner John Pearson congratulates a newly sworn JCO.





# DJJ Holds POST Swearing In Ceremony



tional amendments. More importantly, he encouraged the officers to think how they want to be viewed in the communities they serve. He emphasized that integrity and trustworthiness are values that should always be upheld in their work.

Northeast Regional Administrator Todd Bentley spoke to the new officers and expressed the importance of teamwork in law enforcement. "The team you all built during training is the same one you all have to take to the community. Every day, it is all hands on deck. All of us must come together for the youth we serve and

On November 9, 2017, Commissioner Avery D. Niles swore-in eight High Intensity Team Supervision (HITS) officers, three School Resource Officers (SROs), one Security Management Response Team (SMRT) officer and one investigator. The newly sworn officers completed nine weeks of training to fulfill the requirements set by the Georgia Peace Officers Standards and Training Council (POST). Family members, friends and DJJ staff members were invited to Central Office to attend the ceremony.

their families." DJJ's newest peace officers will continue to carry out their duties in multiple capacities throughout the state. The officers also agreed to uphold the mission of POST in providing the citizens of Georgia with qualified, professionally trained, ethical and competent peace officers and criminal justice professionals.

Commissioner Niles tested the officers' knowledge on significant case outcomes, policies and constitu-

Several members of the DJJ executive staff gave congratulatory remarks and imparted words of wisdom. "We are proud of you. Reflect on your training and experience and learn how to apply them. If you cannot apply them, you cannot be successful," said







Catina Martin-Fenner, Deputy Commissioner of Community Services. "You have to be committed, because sometimes you are all these youth have."

"DJJ is a family and now you are a part of it," added Victor Roberts, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Community Services. "We have a responsibility to take care of our youth and make sure they are going in the right direction. When you respond as a family, you don't fall apart, but come together. Trust your leadership and encourage youth to come to you with any problems they have."

**DJJ congratulates the newly sworn peace officers and thanks them for their continued excellence within the agency:**

- Tammie Albritten – JPO 2 – Dougherty HITS
- Cynthia Baxter – JPO 1 – Floyd HITS
- Patricia Bedford – Senior Investigator – Central Office
- Dimitrius Breedlove – JPO 1 – Hall HITS
- Jennie Carson – SMRT – Central Office
- Grequenceo Coger – JPO 2 – Houston HITS
- Jerelyn Calhoun – JPO 1 – Spalding HITS



Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton

Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton reminded the group, "You are being held to a higher standard and trusted to oversee one of our most vulnerable populations. You earned this honor because of your training, character and willingness to serve others."

Commissioner Niles concluded the ceremony by telling the officers, "There is good in everything we do. Let our policies and laws that we are governed by support you and push you forward. Your impact on our youth is what truly matters."

- Danika Dasset – JPO 1 – Fulton HITS
- Vontavious Howell – JPO 1 – Baldwin HITS
- Dometrius Monts – SRO Supervisor – Muscogee HITS
- Christopher Osby – SRO – Augusta HITS
- Davanion Sallad – JPO 1 – Chatham HITS
- Ashlee Underwood – JPO 1 – Fulton HITS
- Aaron Wilcox – SRO Supervisor – Bibb HITS





## DJJ Graduates BJPOT Class #012 and BCST Class #013

On November 17, 2017, DJJ held graduation exercises for the Basic Juvenile Probation Officer Training (BJPOT) Mandate Class #012 and the Basic Community Services Training (BCST) Class #013 at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center. Family, friends and DJJ staff members attended to honor the four Juvenile Probation Officers (JPOs) and 22 Juvenile Parole Probation Specialists (JPPS) sworn-in by Training Academy Director DeBaja Coleman. The classes chose as their motto "We shall overcome any obstacles in our way that pertain to serving the youth and their families. We the best DJJ."

The DJJ Color Guard conducted the Presentation of Colors followed by the National Anthem. Natalia Rivera from Evans Community Services Office (CSO) delivered the Invocation; Kimberly Wood from Fulton

HITS welcomed guests to the ceremony; Deputy Commissioner of Community Services Catina Martin-Fenner gave the Greeting; and Cornesha Sanders from Bibb Multi-Service Center (MSC) introduced the graduation speaker, Emanuel Bryson, Director of District Seven.

"A life is not important except for the impact it has on others' lives," said Director Bryson, quoting baseball player Jackie Robinson. He spoke to the graduates about opportunities and the importance of never missing one. "We are truly in the change-making business and our communities look to us to take that lead. I challenge each of you to be a change-maker, be the difference makers and take every opportunity that you may have to make the difference in the lives of young persons."







Commissioner Niles congratulates a graduate.



District Seven Director Emanuel Bryson

Director Coleman presented Class Awards and recognized the officers who graduated with honors. Sonya Davis (Baldwin CSO) and Natalia Rivera (Evans CSO) were both given the Class Leadership Award. Mychelle McCrimon received the Look Sharp Award; the Physical Fitness Award went to Nnamdi Onyekwuluje (Bibb MSC); and Reginald Davis (Fulton HITS) earned the One Team Spirit Award and the Top Gun Award.

Chelsea Wakefield (Muscookee HITS) and Bryce Wishart (Pickens CSO) were named Distinguished Honor Graduates, having achieved the highest grade point averages. Jaylin Allen (DeKalb MSC), Vann Davis (Crisp CSO), Ernest Gilmore (Cherokee CSO), Ciara Grimes (Houston CSO), Natalia Rivera (Evans CSO), Cornesha Sanders (Bibb MSC), Shanice Webster (Fulton MSC), Dajuan Williams (Appling CSO), Sarah Williams (Camden CSO) and Apryl Wright (DeKalb MSC) were recognized as Honor Graduates.

Ciara Grimes gave the Class Reflections. "We became one big family over these past weeks as we overcame many obstacles. This has been a great experience and I'm just so glad we accomplished this together. We are very thankful for the tools and resources that have been provided so we can be successful in all that we do."



DJJ Board member Willie C. Bolton



HITS Officers April Smith and William Crawford





District Six Director Marcia Daniely also spoke to the graduates. "Each of you has a very important task. You have an opportunity to help a young person. Most of their lives didn't start out in the right direction. Remember to always be your best and always give your best. Don't be quick to judge and offer whatever help you can. Get to know the families of the children you're working with. They are going to depend on you."

DJJ Board Member Willie C. Bolton introduced Commissioner Avery D. Niles who delivered the Closing Comments. "There are many opportunities for you in this agency. Our governor speaks very highly of what we have done as an agency. Each of you is tasked to be a beacon of light for these youth. This job will take all you have and then some. You are going to have to learn how to lean on the people close to you." Commissioner Niles also recognized HITS officers April Smith and William Crawford for their service and commitment. Chaplain Horne gave the Benediction followed by the Recessional.



## Congratulations to the Basic Juvenile Probation Officer Training Class #012:

Brice Abrams – Rockdale HITS  
Reginald Henry – Fulton HITS

Mychelle McCrimon – Tift HITS  
\*\*Chelsea Wakefield – Muscogee HITS

## Congratulations to the Basic Community Services Training Class #013:

\*Jaylin Allen – DeKalb MSC  
Sonya Davis – Baldwin CSO  
\*Vann Davis – Crisp CSO  
Sonia Edwards – Liberty CSO  
\*Ernest Gilmore – Cherokee CSO  
Zarinah Green – DeKalb MSC  
\*Ciara Grimes – Houston CSO  
Kelly Hunter – Toombs CSO  
Renata Jenkins – Newton CSO  
Pernell Lane – Spalding CSO  
Maude Martin – Camden CSO

Nnamdi Onyekwuluje – Bibb MSC  
\*Natalia Rivera – Evans CSO  
Akeem Roberts – Upson CSO  
\*Cornesha Sanders – Bibb MSC  
\*Shanice Webster – Fulton MSC  
\*Dajuan Williams – Appling CSO  
\*Sarah Williams – Camden CSO  
\*\*Bryce Wishart – Pickens CSO  
Kimberly Wood – Fulton MSC  
\*Apryl Wright – DeKalb MSC  
Brittany Wright – Henry CSO

\*Honor Graduate

\*\*Distinguished Honor Graduate

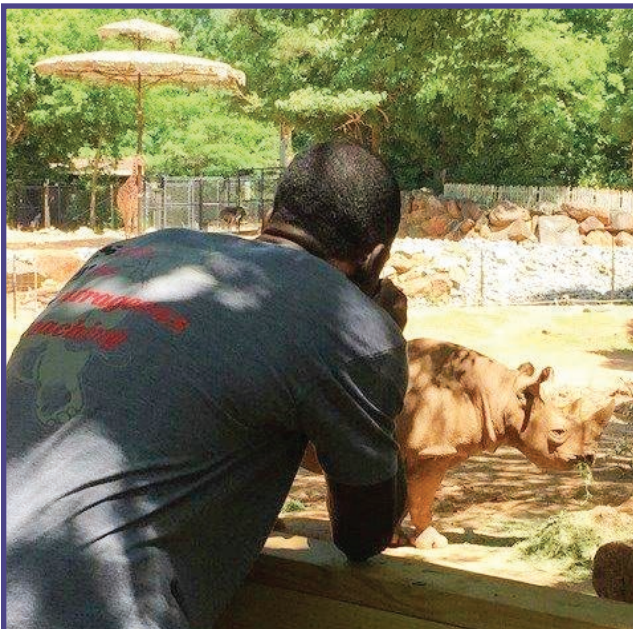
# DJJ Youth Enjoy Educational Field Trips Across Georgia



Youths from Muscogee YDC visit sea turtle nesting grounds and learn about wildlife conservation at the Georgia Sea Turtle Center.

Students from the seven YDCs have recently participated in a number of educational and culturally enriching field trips organized by the Office of Volunteer Services. Selected youth from Atlanta, Augusta, Eastman, Macon, Milledgeville, Muscogee and Sumter YDCs spent time outside of the classroom and enjoyed a hands-on approach to learning. Students visited venues including the Atlanta Botanical Gardens, Center for Civil and Human Rights, Georgia Sea Turtle Center (Jekyll Island), High Museum of Art, Koinonia Farm (Americus) and Zoo Atlanta.

The Office of Volunteer Services expanded its services to leverage partnerships with these venues to cover the cost of admission. Youth must qualify to go on field trips by exhibiting good behavior and be recommended by facility staff.



Sumter YDC youths visit Zoo Atlanta.

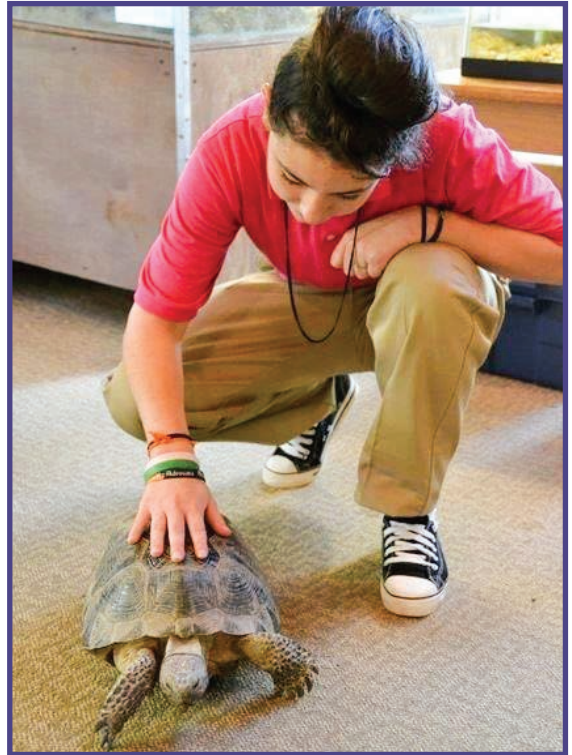


Atlanta YDC youth study murals from the Hale Woodruff Exhibit at the High Museum of Art.





Augusta YDC youths (above) enjoy walking through the Atlanta Botanical Gardens while a student from Macon YDC gets to know the wildlife at a local state park.



During these field trips, participating youth have also taken part in service learning activities. Youth from Eastman YDC and Macon YDC visited the Middle Georgia Food Bank to pack boxes of food and toiletries which were distributed to those in need in 24 counties. Young men from Sumter YDC went to Koinonia Farm in Americus to work in the community garden. Produce from the garden is also used to feed those needing food assistance.

Staff from the Division of Secure Campuses and the Office of Volunteer Services look forward to continuing to facilitate field trips and service learning activities that will allow DJJ students to gain greater insights through cultural activities and give them opportunities to give back to those in need.



Eastman YDC students (above) work in the community garden at Koinonia Farm. Produce from the garden is used to provide meals for those in need. Youths from Macon YDC (left) sit at the lunch counter sit-in stimulation at the Center for Civil and Human Rights.



# DJJ Holds Graduation for BJCOT Class #223



me," he said. "As future leaders of the department, I dare you to be visionaries. Encourage growth, understand the possibilities in others, be a catalyst for change and share leadership. You can't travel this road alone. Allow others to assist you in your journey."

DJJ Board member Willie C. Bolton thanked the graduates for their service and being "the vanguard for the juvenile community." He encouraged the class to take advantage of the friendships they formed and to support each other in times of need.

Ninety-five men and women from BJCOT Class #223 were sworn-in as JCOs during graduation exercises. Family members, friends and DJJ dignitaries gathered at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth on December 22, 2017, to witness the occasion. The graduates chose as their class motto "We came, we conquered, we strive to succeed, we are the class of 2-2-3!"

The DJJ Honor Guard conducted the Presentation of Colors followed by the National Anthem. John Pirkle, Jr. (Sandersville RYDC) gave the Invocation; Tony Dunn (Metro RYDC) welcomed guests to the ceremony; DJJ Director of Planning and Preparedness Scott Cagle gave the Greeting; and Jazzmin Bethea from Atlanta YDC introduced Jimmie Hooks, director of their facility, who gave the primary graduation speech.

Director Hooks spoke to the graduates on the importance of leadership and responsibility. "I challenge this class to lead the way. Take heart in the mission of DJJ in protecting and serving the citizens of Georgia. It is a lot of responsibility. It's bigger than you and

Deputy Commissioner Sean Hamilton also delivered words of encouragement. "We need you to leave here today inspired and encouraged. Go back to your facilities and realize why you are doing this and



Atlanta YDC Director Jimmie Hooks





Commissioner Niles congratulates a graduate.



Officer Jonathan Williams gave the Class Comments.

take your job very seriously. All the youth in our 26 facilities are looking to you to help change their lives and be a pro-social adult who can make the difference for them," said Hamilton. "Always know that you have the support of the leadership and the entire executive team. We are so happy that you are officially one of us today."

Public Safety Training Instructor Annie Sams presented the Class Awards. Jessica Rutledge (Gainesville RYDC) earned the Highest Academic Achievement

Award; The Look Sharp Award went to Taylor Payne (Milledgeville YDC); Taylor Payne and Talia Williams (Metro RYDC) received the Physical Fitness Awards; The One Team Spirit Award was given to Jill Bell (Wilkes RYDC); and the Leadership Awards went to Wilbert Kennedy, Jr. (Metro RYDC) and Taylor Payne. Torrence Hicks (Waycross RYDC) and Taylor Payne were recognized as Class Leaders. Gregory Brown II and Deborah Griffin (both from Augusta RYDC), Wilbert Kennedy, Jr. and Talia Williams were honored as Section Leaders.



## The DJJ Digest

On behalf of the agency, Commissioner Avery D. Niles honored fallen officer Dalton Rogers, who served as a JCO at Eastman YDC. During the ceremony, Commissioner Niles expressed his condolences to Rogers' family and presented them with his badge and shirt in honor of his service and dedication.

Cordero Foster, SMRT II, presented the graduation certificates. DeBaja Coleman administered the Oath of Office and Jonathan Williams (Atlanta YDC) was elected to give the Class Comments. Williams encouraged his class not to let anything stop them from achieving their dreams and to always keep going when life's obstacles come their way. Commissioner Niles delivered the Closing Comments and congratulated the officers on their success. Danny Horne from Chaplaincy Services delivered the Benediction.

Fallen officer Dalton Rogers was honored for his service and dedication. Commissioner Niles presented the Rogers family with his shirt and badge.



## Congratulations to the Graduates of BJCOT Class #223:

Gregory Bailey – Gainesville RYDC  
Brian Baldwin – Wilkes RYDC  
Kwamaine Bazemore – Metro RYDC  
Brandon Beard – Milledgeville YDC  
Jill Bell – Wilkes RYDC  
Christian Bellina – Metro RYDC  
Jasmine Benton – Atlanta YDC  
Jazzmin Bethea – Atlanta YDC  
Hassain Blackspear – Atlanta YDC  
Naiya Bond – Macon RYDC  
Tacey Boone – Milledgeville YDC  
Jessie Bowman – Sumter YDC  
\*Gregory Brown II – Augusta RYDC  
Marvin Brown – Milledgeville YDC  
Janna' Bryant – Milledgeville YDC  
Lyacquetta Buchanan – Terrell County RYDC  
Stacy Burkhammer – Marietta RYDC  
Keante Butts – Milledgeville YDC  
Joe Cephus, Jr. – Claxton RYDC  
Adriatica Clark – Sumter YDC  
Aaron Colquitt – Milledgeville YDC  
Contravious Compton – Atlanta YDC  
Kandic Daniel – Sumter YDC  
Tyzenea Daniels – Macon RYDC  
Dominique Davis – Sumter YDC

Shavorious Dean – Macon RYDC  
Gloria Downing – Atlanta YDC  
Shirley Dunbar – Gainesville RYDC  
Tony Dunn – Metro RYDC  
Johnny Evans – Augusta RYDC  
Jammahr Fewquay – DeKalb RYDC  
Franchester Flowers – Macon RYDC  
Jessica Franks – Atlanta YDC  
Jasmine Fulks – Sumter YDC  
Chassy Gilbert – Sumter YDC  
Jacinta Giles – Metro RYDC  
Joseph Gore – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Christopher Green – Crisp RYDC  
\*Deborah Griffin – Augusta RYDC  
Astariya Harris – Atlanta YDC  
Michelle Harris – Terrell County RYDC  
Johnette Henderson – Atlanta YDC  
Mykeria Hendrix – Atlanta YDC  
\*\*Torrence Hicks – Waycross RYDC  
Demetria High – Metro RYDC  
Brandy Hightower – Eastman YDC  
Amelia Holiday – Augusta YDC  
Laquisha Howard – Milledgeville YDC  
Ju-Wan Jackson – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Shavonta Jackson – Claxton RYDC



## Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice

Tina Jenkins – Wilkes RYDC  
Najee Johnson – DeKalb RYDC  
Rachel Kemp – Atlanta YDC  
\*Wilbert Kennedy, Jr. – Metro RYDC  
Erenia Lopez-Gadea – Gainesville RYDC  
John Lutz – Wilkes RYDC  
Maya Marshall – Sumter YDC  
Paula Marshall – Sumter YDC  
Tamika Marshall-Dyer – Atlanta YDC  
Maryrose McCarthy – Savannah RYDC  
Dakota McDaniel – Gainesville RYDC  
Sharmese McDowell – Augusta YDC  
Rabiya Minor – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Tevin Noble – Marietta RYDC  
Kristopher Odum – Muscogee YDC  
Jayota Patton – Atlanta YDC  
\*\*Taylor Payne – Milledgeville YDC  
John Pirkle, Jr. – Wilkes RYDC  
Britney Prescott – Wilkes RYDC  
Donna Reid – Macon RYDC  
Krystal Renfro – Milledgeville YDC  
Taneshia Robinson – Metro RYDC  
Clarissa Russell – Eastman YDC  
\*\*\*Jessica Rutledge – Gainesville RYDC

Samaya Sapp – Augusta RYDC  
Daniel Sheffield – Crisp RYDC  
Cadera Staley – Milledgeville YDC  
Jaylyn Starling – Terrell County RYDC  
Laquita Starr – Waycross RYDC  
Quintrass Stephens – Terrell County RYDC  
Craig Stevens – Atlanta YDC  
Layshawna Stringer – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Jasmine Thomas – Macon RYDC  
Cordell Turner – Wilkes RYDC  
Ashley Walker – Milledgeville YDC  
Latoya Walker – Wilkes RYDC  
Dylan Warren – SMRT  
Cedric Washington – Terrell County RYDC  
Latoncha Watts – Martha K. Glaze RYDC  
Montel Webb – Augusta RYDC  
Bria White – Waycross RYDC  
Jonathan Williams – Atlanta YDC  
\*Talia Williams – Metro RYDC  
Tiffany Woods – Marietta RYDC

\*Section Leader

\*\*Class Leader

\*\*\*Highest Academic Achievement



## Juvenile Law Center Announces Georgia's Judge Steven Teske to Receive 2018 Leadership Award



DJJ Board member Judge Steven Teske

America's oldest public interest law firm for children announced the recipients of this year's Juvenile Law Center Leadership Prize. Judge Steven C. Teske, who is Chief Judge of the Juvenile Court of Clayton County, has been named as one of three national winners of the Center's 2018 leadership award.

Judge Teske, who is a member of DJJ's Judicial Advisory Council, is receiving the award from the Juvenile Law Center in recognition of his breakthrough strategy to advocate for at-risk kids using a School-Justice Partnership approach to break up school pathways into the juvenile justice system.

Established in 1975, the Juvenile Law Center is recognized nationally and internationally for its expert-

ise as a trailblazer in the field of children's rights law, inspiring children's rights advocates working nationwide. The juvenile advocacy group's annual Leadership Prize is awarded to outstanding activists who work to advance the rights and well-being of youth in the child welfare and justice systems.

Awardees like Judge Teske, who has testified before Congress on four occasions about topics ranging from detention reform to zero tolerance policies in schools, are viewed by the Juvenile Law Center as advocates who have changed the field of children's rights through a lifetime of work on behalf of youth or "through a landmark contribution with enduring significance."

Teske stated that when he began the groundwork to create the nation's first school-justice partnership in 2003 he had no idea that so many other jurisdictions nationwide would want to adopt the Clayton County model. Those jurisdictions established their local goals to replicate Georgia's successful outcome for reducing delinquency, using positive incentives to promote local graduation rates.

Teske generously shares the accolades of program success with many youth advocates and partners who have supported the School-Justice Partnership approach in many juvenile court jurisdictions. "My thanks to the Annie E. Casey Foundation model for inspiring me in 2003, and I am grateful to the Juvenile Law Center for highlighting the model's benefits," Teske said.

"Thanks to Georgia Governor Nathan Deal too, for giving me an opportunity to be a part of his Criminal Justice Reform movement. Governor Deal's vision and leadership are changing the trajectory of lives in Georgia for the betterment of all," the judge stated.

And finally, Judge Teske said he must share honors with DJJ Assistant Commissioner Joe Vignati. Teske credits Vignati for his many years of support and





In addition to Judge Teske, two other high-profile Juvenile Law Center awardees have also played significant roles advocating for youth while using different strategies to advance their rights.

Juvenile justice attorney Francis (“Frankie”) Guzman has helped lead efforts to reduce the number of youth prosecuted as adults and serving time in California’s adult criminal justice system. Through partnerships and community organizations, he advocates for alternative sentencing for youth charged with serious offenses to eliminate the prosecution and incarceration of young offenders.

advice while the School-Justice Partnership model was in development. “Joe Vignati helped to shape my advocacy for youth leading to positive outcomes in detention reform,” summarized Teske.

Judge Teske served two terms on the Federal Advisory Committee for Juvenile Justice and is the National Chair of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. He was appointed a juvenile court judge in 1999 and serves as a Superior Court Judge by designation. Governor Deal appointed Judge Teske to the Children and Youth Coordinating Council, Governor’s Office for Children and Families, JDAI Statewide Steering Committee, Georgia Commission on Family Violence and the Georgia Criminal Justice Reform Commission.

Sue Mangold, Executive Director of the Juvenile Law Center, declared that recipients of the Leadership Prize like Judge Teske have made a real impact and are “leading lights in the field whose inspirational careers have served as beacons for the next generation of advocates.”

In its Juvenile Justice Awareness Month coverage, *Teen Vogue* news and politics editor Allison Maloney conceptualized and produced the Kids Incarcerated series with nearly 30 stories spanning topics like immigration, youth detention, the school-to-prison pipeline, bail reform and solitary confinement.

Mangold said the Juvenile Law Center provides the Leadership Prize for the work of awardees like Teske, Guzman and Maloney that substantially improve the lives of the nation’s most vulnerable youth. “We are privileged to work with them and to honor their achievements,” she said.

The Juvenile Law Center will celebrate the awardees at a reception on May 9 at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. Solomon Jones, author, journalist, columnist and community champion on youth and criminal justice issues, will emcee the event.

Juvenile  
Law Center **advancing the rights and  
well-being of children in jeopardy**

# DJJ Holds POST Swearing In Ceremony



Commissioner Niles swore-in four HITS officers and one investigator in a ceremony held at Central Office on January 12. Family members, friends and DJJ staff members attended to congratulate the officers who completed the nine weeks of required training mandated by POST. The newly sworn officers will now have the power to arrest and carry a firearm.

The officers were assessed on their knowledge of notable case dispositions, standards and constitutional amendments. The Commissioner and members of the Executive Staff also offered words of wisdom and encouragement.

“In this line of work, you must remember to believe in forgiveness. Your relationships with others will speak volumes. It’s all about your conduct and character,” said Commissioner Niles. “Remember who you represent and we hope your training will allow you to make a difference for the youth in your care.”

Assistant Commissioner Keith Horton reminded the officers that they have a great responsibility in helping





the most vulnerable youth in the system. "Many of the youth you will serve will not have a strong parental figure in their lives. Therefore, it may be up to you to become the role model they need," Horton said. "Many times you may be the person that sets the standard between right and wrong, so you must always maintain a fair sense of judgement with every situation you encounter."

"Some days are going to be tougher than others, but know that you got what it takes to give your best effort each and every day," said Assistant Commissioner Joe Vignati. "You learned, trained and earned this honor. You have taken an oath and we are counting on you."

Commissioner Niles concluded the ceremony by reminding the officers to serve with dignity, honor and love. "That's all I ask. With the oath that each of you took, you promised to protect and serve. Remember to serve the people in your community and do what's right."

**DJJ congratulates the following officers and thanks them for their continued dedication within this agency:**

Mychelle McCrimon – JPO – Tift HITS  
Chelsea Wakefield – JPO – Muscogee HITS  
Reginald Henry – JPO – Fulton HITS  
Brice Abrams – JPO – Rockdale HITS  
Investigator Caitlyn Weber – Central Office





The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is a multi-faceted agency that serves the needs of the state's young offenders up to the age of 21. The Department employs more than 4,000 men and women at 26 secure facilities (19 Regional Youth Detention Centers and 7 Youth Development Campuses) and 96 Community Services Offices throughout the state to effect justice and redirect the young lives in the agency's care.

Including those placed on probation, thousands of youths are diverted each year to evidence-based community programs, sentenced to short-term incarceration and/or committed to long-term custody by Juvenile Courts. DJJ's professional corrections and law enforcement staff preserve public safety and safeguard the citizens of Georgia, as well as protect the victims of crimes so that they can rebuild their lives. DJJ holds juvenile offenders accountable for their delinquent conduct through probation, supervision and/or secure detention so that they take responsibility for their actions.

While under DJJ supervision, youth are provided with educational opportunities by some of Georgia's best teachers and administrators, as well as medical, dental and mental health treatment from qualified professionals who provide a range of services and support. DJJ also offers programs designed to equip the youth in its care with the social, intellectual and emotional tools needed to achieve their successful reentry and reintegration into community, workplace and neighborhood settings as more productive and law-abiding citizens.

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