



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF
JUVENILE JUSTICE
AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Avery D. Niles, Commissioner
Scott Mall
Office of Communications



DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
3408 Covington Highway • Decatur, Georgia • 30032-1513
Telephone: (404) 508-7147 • Fax: (404) 508-7341

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MEDIA RELEASE
Monday, February 12**

CONTACT:
Mary Catherine Heard
DJJ Communications
(404) 508-7147
marycatherine.heard@djj.state.ga.us

Youth at Elbert Shaw RYDC Inspires Others Through Art

(Dalton, GA) – Alberto Rodriguez, a youth at the Elbert Shaw Regional Youth Detention Center (RYDC), is inspiring his fellow classmates and staff through art. Over the past several months, Rodriguez has been busy painting the Georgia Preparatory Academy's (GPA) insignia, the facility's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) motto and a cottage motif throughout the hallways of the facility.

"Alberto is very gifted and possesses a tremendous amount of artistic talent," said GPA vocational instructor April Baker. "We want to use talent like Rodriguez's to cultivate an atmosphere where we prepare our students for a future they want, not the life they had."

"My murals enable me to express myself in a positive way. They encourage others, motivate me and take my mind off things I can't change," Rodriguez said. "Being able to express myself through art gives me a great sense of pride and accomplishment, especially when I see the reaction of those who see my finished work." According to staff, Rodriguez is always encouraging his classmates to participate in activities and to work together as a student body.

GPA teachers and instructors also incorporate art in many of their lessons through the Art Across the Curriculum initiative. Additionally, students at Elbert Shaw RYDC enjoy

(more)

gardening in the facility's greenhouse and participating in family engagement events. "Each activity builds upon the others to encourage, inspire and influence all of our students to realize their full potential. We want to give them an outlet they can all take part in," said Baker.

DJJ thanks Lowe's, White's, Ace Hardware and other local businesses in Dalton for donating paint and supplies so students like Rodriguez can participate in art projects. The generosity of these businesses allows GPA students to see that the community supports them and is rooting for them to succeed.

(###)

About DJJ

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.