



GEORGIA DEPARTMENT
OF **JUVENILE JUSTICE**

AVERY D. NILES, COMMISSIONER

A MESSAGE FROM THE
OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

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DJJ FOCUS ON MENTORING:
First Lady Sandra Deal Presents DJJ Deputy Commissioner Draper With
‘Servant’s Heart Award’

(ATLANTA – GA) DJJ Commissioner Avery D. Niles is pleased to announce a member of his executive management team has been named the recipient of First Lady Sandra Deal’s ‘Servant’s Heart’ service award. DJJ Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Secure Campuses Sarah Draper received the special recognition during a reception at the Georgia Governor’s Mansion.

The presentation ceremonies included a personal tour of the historic residence led by the First Lady. Sandra Deal declared her commitment to spread awareness of the importance of volunteerism as part of her platform as First Lady in 2011. She later founded the ‘Servant’s Heart Award’ with the goal of recognizing exceptional individuals who share her enthusiasm for volunteerism and mentoring.

Now each year, Mrs. Deal personally recognizes nominees for their selfless work for the betterment of their communities. Deputy Commissioner Draper was nominated as an exceptional leader whose quiet acts of kindness, concern and mentoring favorably impact the lives of others in the juvenile justice system on a daily basis.

Deputy Commissioner Draper oversees DJJ’s seven statewide long-term Youth Development Campuses (YDCs). Draper is responsible for the safety, security, education and rehabilitation of some of the most high-risk youth incarcerated in Georgia’s juvenile justice system.

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“Deputy Commissioner Draper has a significant background in law enforcement and correctional services,” said the award documentation submitted by DC Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb.

“However, this nomination is not about how well Ms. Draper does her job. It’s because of what she brings to our youth that’s outside the scope of her role,” Reynolds-Cobb wrote.

“DC Draper’s special approach to volunteerism has been a real life-changer, both for her and for many of our DJJ youth,” said Commissioner Niles. “It has guided her to a broader perspective of the exceptional challenges faced by our troubled youth,” the Commissioner said.

The nomination for DC Draper’s Servant’s Heart Award emphasizes that her colleagues marvel at how she uses her personal time on nights and weekends to explore new community programs to benefit DJJ’s young offenders.

Draper’s extra efforts have resulted in new DJJ partnerships with the Special Olympics; with programs like ‘Beat the Streets’ in partnership with the Atlanta Track Club; and a sponsorship with Mizuno sporting goods – all with the constructive effects of exposing DJJ youth to health and fitness while teaching them to positively address life issues.

“Ms. Draper is an advocate and mentor and a voice for our youth,” said DC Reynolds-Cobb. “But more importantly, she truly believes that with appropriate resources and support, even our most troubled youth are capable of turning their lives around.”

Draper was also the creative force behind DJJ’s ‘Rescue-2-Restore’ animal care and adoption program and the founding of DJJ Girl Scout Troops at secure facilities in greater Atlanta and Middle Georgia. Draper developed these unique youth programs as service learning projects where young offenders could be productive and give back to their communities while still committed to state custody. Youth volunteers who are accepted to participate make toys for adopted pets and animal shelters and handcraft holiday cards and quilts to bring cheer and comfort to the elderly.

“Ms. Draper’s programs go above and beyond, providing the extra support our youth require to help them upon re-entry into the community,” said DC Reynolds-Cobb. “She serves as a mentor for many of the youth in our facilities, which often fills the gap of family for some of the youth in our care. Draper is always looking for ways to inspire others to invest time or encouragement in the lives of DJJ’s challenged kids.”

As recipient of the First Lady’s Servant’s Heart Award, Draper says she tackles all these tasks because she believes in DJJ’s young offenders and in their ability to be successful.

“When we show them we believe in them, they will show us something different in their behavior,” Deputy Commissioner Draper explained. “We are not trying to make them perfect, but we are trying to make them better.”

To read more about juvenile justice special learning projects and partnerships visit DJJ’s newsletter on the “News & Views” webpage at <http://www.djjnewsandviews.org> .

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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The Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) is a multi-faceted agency that serves the needs of this state's young offenders up to the age of 21. The Department employs more than 4,000 men and women at 26 secure facilities and 97 community services offices throughout the state to effect justice and redirect the young lives in the agency's care.

Including those who are placed on probation, more than 50,000 youths are diverted each year to evidence-based community programs, sentenced to short-term incarceration or committed to the Department's long-term custody by the Juvenile Courts. It is the duty of DJJ's professional corrections staff to preserve public safety and safeguard the citizens of Georgia, as well as protect the victims of crimes so that they can rebuild their lives.

At the same time, DJJ holds juvenile offenders accountable for their delinquent conduct so that they can take responsibility for their actions through probation, supervision and secure detention. The youth are provided with medical and psychological treatment, as well as specialized education and programs designed to equip them 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.