

ADVOCATE

A PUBLICATION OF THE VIRGINIA JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSOCIATION

Winter 2009



Read more about these folks inside.



Views from the Ledge...

By Editor, Gary L. Conway

This is one of those columns where I probably need to put our disclaimer right up front. So here it is:

The statements and opinions expressed in the Advocate are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the members of the Board of Directors.

Allow me to add that the following article also does not necessarily reflect the views of the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice by whom I am employed ...for the moment.

That being said, on December 17, Governor Kaine released his proposed budget for FY10. It includes cuts that would end state-operated inpatient psychiatric treatment for children and adolescents in Virginia. The plan involves closing all public child and adolescent inpatient psychiatric beds (the Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents and 16 adolescent beds at Southwest Virginia Mental Health Institute) and allocating \$2 million for private hospital beds.

The Commonwealth Center for Children and Adolescents (CCCA) is located here in our jurisdiction. I can practically hit the place with a rock from my Staunton office, but not quite. CCCA serves children and adolescents from around the Commonwealth, and the folks who work there are extremely good at what they do. In FY08, the Center had 605 admissions, served 559 kids, for a total of 12,114 bed days. The Center's annual budget is \$8.3 million.

The arguments supporting closure of the Commonwealth Center are:

- The Commonwealth of Virginia is in a major financial bind and cuts need to be made in the state's budget.
- Those children being served by the Commonwealth Center (and SWVMHI) would be better served in facilities closer to their homes.
- It will be more cost-efficient to serve children needing inpatient psychiatric treatment through a public/private partnership.

OK. I get it. But could we take a closer look at those numbers?

After closing the Commonwealth Center and re-investing the \$2 million to purchase treatment in private hospitals, the state hopes to realize a net yearly savings somewhere in the neighborhood of \$6.3 million. That's CCCA's budget of \$8.3

million minus the \$2 million the state will use to purchase private bed space.

Using the FY08 figure of 12,114 total bed days occupied at the Commonwealth Center, we come up with a per diem cost of \$685 for a child to receive inpatient care and treatment at CCCA. I don't know if any of you have placed your kid in a private psychiatric hospital lately, but I have. And the bill was on the high side of \$1,500 per day. (Thank God and the Commonwealth for Value Options!). But let's say for the sake of argument that Governor Kaine could negotiate with private hospitals to get that per diem cost down to 1,000 bucks. At \$1,000 per day, those 559 kids who spent 12,114 days at the Commonwealth Center in FY08 would have cost Virginia taxpayers \$12,114,000 in private hospitals. If my math is correct, that would have been 32% MORE than the Commonwealth Center's budget and over 6 TIMES the 2 mil Governor Kaine wants to allocate for private bed space in FY10.

Those 559 children and adolescents in question would have cost Virginia \$12.1 million in FY08 IF private hospitals had had room for those kids, and IF (an even bigger if) the private facilities had agreed to accept those children. So let's take a survey. How many of you out there have ever tried to get a probationer/parolee/ detainee/foster child/student into a private psychiatric hospital? Go ahead, raise your hand. How did that work out for ya? Were you successful? Why not? No bed space? No insurance? The family lived too far away? The kid had delinquent charges? The child was too dangerous? The child was just too dayumned mean? All of the above? I rest my case.

To think that the private providers of inpatient psychiatric treatment for children and adolescents are going to accept all or even many of the kids treated at the Commonwealth Center and SWVMHI is unrealistic if not delusional thinking. They never have, and they never will; because they don't have to.

As you ponder this dilemma, consider whether or not we in Virginia would ever think of closing all of the state-operated ADULT psychiatric hospitals in the Commonwealth. Not likely; especially when you consider that during their 2008 Session the Virginia Legislature appropriated \$110 million to build a brand new Western State Hospital. That would be a new adult psychiatric hospital, ironically to be built within spitting distance of the Commonwealth Center.

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Beth's Blog

By VJJA President, Beth Stinnett

(President Stinnett's Opening Remarks at the 32nd Fall Institute, November 5, 2008.)

Good morning. What an historic time in our country for us to come together. It is my privilege to welcome you

to the 32nd Fall Juvenile Justice Institute, *"Changing the Script and Unlocking the Future"*. For those of you who do not know me, my name is Beth Stinnett, and I am the president of the conference host, the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association (VJJA).

Most of you have been members of the professional association for many years, but for those of you who have joined recently as part of your participation in the conference we welcome you to our network and look forward to getting to know you over the course of the next two days.

VJJA is a diverse organization of more than 1000 professionals from nearly every agency and organization in the Commonwealth that touches the lives of court-involved children and that diversity is represented here today. More than 200 participants, exhibitors and speakers are registered for the event. Some participants have traveled from as far away as Southwest Virginia and Tidewater, while many are from right here in the Charlottesville area. The group assembled here today represents court services, the judiciary, secure detention, corrections, social services, mental health, education, and more. And with a roster that diverse, we know that the opportunities for cross-agency learning and peer to peer learning are endless.

Many months of preparation and planning unfold before you today and I want to personally thank my entire Board of Directors and other members of the conference planning committee for lending their time and talents over the last year. I especially want to thank Samantha Higgins, our Conference Registrar (who you will hear from a little later this morning), Amanda Moseley, Katherine Farmer, Susan Farmer, and Diane Shelton, for their considerable contributions.

Through the years, VJJA has been on the forefront of bringing best practice information and innovations to Virginia and providing opportunities for professionals to come together to learn from one another and the 32nd Fall Institute continues in that tradition.

From a slate of exceptional plenary session speakers, to afternoon workshops featuring both nationally-recognized

speakers and "home grown" talent, to opportunities for networking with colleagues, I believe the conference committee has assembled a diverse and dynamic program for you.

In recent months we have all seen two presidential campaigns unfold before us, both built around the theme of change for our country. So it is befitting that we convene here today on a theme of change as well.

In recognition that the goals of juvenile justice have shifted away from control and compliance to emphasizing long-term behavior change, our conference theme of *"Changing the Script and Unlocking the Future"*. For too many children in the juvenile justice system, the current "script" is both formulaic and bleak. Far too many young people in our country are graduating to the adult system and serving periods of incarceration. In fact, according to the US Department of Justice, at the end of 2006 about one in every 31 adults in the United States was in prison, in jail or on supervised release. Even more disturbing, we know that the data reflect deep racial disparities, with a record 905,000 African-American inmates in prisons and jails.

If we are to improve outcomes and "unlock the future" for young people, we must change the juvenile justice "script" by adopting a new approach, reducing an over-reliance on secure confinement and focusing more closely on behavior change. Among the steps that we must take is re-evaluating our own roles. As we will learn from the information and strategies we will be exposed to over the course of the next two days, each of us can be the impetus for positive change. We must recognize that our interactions with young people have a pivotal role in determining subsequent behavior, we must reject the notion of youth workers as solely enforcers of conditions through rigid monitoring and punishment and we must embrace our role as agents of change. Can we do it? In the words of President-Elect Barack Obama, "Yes we can".

(In addition to serving as VJJA President, Beth Stinnett works in central administration at the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. Among her responsibilities is serving as the Statewide JDAI Coordinator.)



Just Us

By R. Erich Telsch

Fly Fishing for Legislation

A lot of people ask me what the best way is to influence a particular piece of legislation. Others tell me they had heard

no new legislation will be accepted this year given the budget crisis. Others express concern that children's issues just do not have any traction, which basically indicates a belief that without voting constituents a bill would not have a chance of passing. Other ways of saying the same thing include that a bill doesn't have any legs, or it is a dog that won't hunt, or a puppy that won't bark, or some other expression of defeatism before the fact. The most often quoted variant is that there is just no money for new projects, as if new ideas are a bad thing and funding the old ideas is a good thing. In fact, I have heard it posited by several people that no new juvenile justice legislation is being introduced this year. All of this indicates to me that we are in for a typical year before the legislative bodies. Smoke is already swirling as the mirrors are getting set into place.

Please remember that legislation is what legislators do. They don't do anything else. They are not responsible for outcomes except as individuals. Inherent to the business of legislation is compromise. Legislators always have a way of finding study money; finding a way to enable a bill without funding it; or placing a bill into a committee for future deliberation and review. Many folks say measures like these effectively "kill" legislation but I hold a contrarian view. I find no reason at all to withdraw my own position or suggestions to improve our society merely because I am told there is no money. Advocacy does not require money — it requires will power. I would much prefer that a legislature vote down a bill seven times seven times than for that bill to have never gotten to the floor because the sponsor withdrew it from consideration. Legislators do have to make difficult choices at times although the outcome rarely directly affects them, their families, or their livelihood. They really have little idea how hard it is for people in the real world and someone needs to remind them on occasion. That's where we come in as child advocates.

As juvenile justice practitioners we put the face of juvenile justice before the legislature. Whether we are telling our personal stories to defend a position on retirement benefits or reminding the educated that not all persons have the same knowledge, skills, and abilities as others, we are the voice for our entire segment of society. We represent persons involved in the justice system from every side of the equation: victims,

witnesses, defendants, and public safety in general. This has little to do with title, authority, or position and a whole lot to do with where you reside. Let me explain.

On any piece of legislation it is not unreasonable that a legislator will receive a thousand emails of support or rejection. A staff member in the office will sift through all of them to determine what the prevalent position is (quantity) and, if possible, where the person lives. If you have a title or position that may have meaning too but it is ancillary to whether you can vote for them in the next election — the legislator's cherished outcome. This is not to demonize the process but just to explain how it works. As the legislative aide compiles the data it will be reported that let's say 50% support and 50% reject a proposed piece of legislation. This is where it gets little tricky, a little like choosing the right fly to tie onto your line in order to catch a trout. To choose correctly an angler needs to know certain fundamentals: whether the water is seasonably cool or warm; what insects are hatching; hook size, presentation, and depth for the most common species; and similar considerations. In the world of legislation, where a person resides becomes a huge factor in a legislator's support or opposition. Of those thousand emails, let's say fifty are from the legislator's District and all of them favor the legislation. The others may be from other areas of Virginia, other states, and yes, even foreign nationals email our legislators. Fifty people cared enough to email in support of a particular piece of legislation. Those same people may vote for the legislator if a favorable outcome is obtained and it appears zero will vote against the legislator, and there is always an election coming. Even if the legislator had no interest in the bill before, they do now, and that is the way self-interest works in the process and generally in our species.

Recognize that if you are a "person of interest" with title or position your email may have a slight advantage as far as influence, but using email is impersonal and not as effective as a telephone call. Generally, when calling you will speak to the same staff member, rarely the legislators themselves, but they are very responsive to courteous calls that contain firm commitment on a bill, forthright reasoned thinking in support or opposition of a bill, and a desire to follow-up and assist the legislator in their consideration. Particularly if you have some expertise in the matter being deliberated, offer your assistance. Being forceful does not include being rude

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Membership Matters

By VJJA Membership Chair, Samantha Higgins

Lower Numbers Recorded at Close of Second Quarter

The second quarter of the VJJA membership year closed December 31, 2008, with significantly lower numbers than last year. For the past two years, we have exceeded 1,000 members. It is disappointing that we are not closing in on that mark, but that is perhaps an indication of the current economy. While annual membership dues remain a modest \$20, to some, and especially those affected by layoffs and cutbacks, \$20 may be a significant amount.

The membership numbers by district are as follows:

DISTRICT	07-08 2 nd Qtr.	08-09 2 nd Qtr.
BLUE RIDGE	90	112
CAPITAL	333	120
NORTHERN	123	105
SOUTHWEST	76	40
TIDEWATER	302	261
VALLEY	91	43
TOTAL	1015	681

Kudos to the Blue Ridge District for being able to increase and stabilize their membership over last year! But beware! The other districts are coming up fast. Each district has training events planning for the New Year which will surely increase membership in their respective districts.

Our membership total includes fourteen lifetime members. At the 32nd Fall Institute, Diane (Floyd) Shelton was awarded lifetime membership for her years of dedicated service to the children and families of the Tidewater Area, and in recognition of her years of being a valued member, and board member, of VJJA.

In addition to the awarding of a lifetime membership, four members were honored with Meritorious Awards. The nomination process and criteria for the awards are managed by the VJJA Awards Committee. Please consult the website or contact Scott Warner with the Awards Committee if you would like to recommend a fellow member for a 2009 award.

Speaking of the Fall Institute, it was an honor to serve as the 2008 Conference Registrar. It was a lot of work, but I enjoyed

the experience of working with new people and helping folks find ways to be able to attend. The task was made easier by also being the Membership Chair and having the ability to immediately verify membership status and track payments received. It also gave me an opportunity to meet many of you while working the registration desk. I manage a database of over 1,200 past and present members and it is nice to be able to meet the members and make that personal connection. I hope all who attended the conference found it to be enjoyable and informative. I will tell you that the Conference Planning Committee is already hard at work planning the 33rd Fall Institute scheduled for November 4-6, 2009, so stay tuned for more information on the venue and agenda.

As a reminder, please send any changes in your employment, or updates to your email and/or postal addresses to me at membership@vjja.org. Be advised I am in the midst of forming a membership committee to assist with the disbursement of membership certificates and stickers. If you are interested or know someone who might be interested please contact me!

Social Work Conference Planned

The Virginia chapter of the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has announced their upcoming conference, "Restoring and Transforming Our Professional Spirit," scheduled for March 12-14, 2008, at the Richmond Omni Hotel. Harriet Lerner, PhD, a nationally recognized voice on the Psychology of women and family relationships, will present the keynote address, "Voice Lessons: Ten Steps to Clarity and Courage in Relationships." Other speakers include Northern District VJJA Member, Patrick Slifka, who will deliver a presentation entitled, "Next Generation Workforce: Ethical and Best Practice Issues for Supervisors". Registration materials and additional information can be downloaded at: www.naswva.org.

Book 'Em

By Eric Assur

***Indefensible: One Lawyer's Journey into the Inferno of American Justice* By David Feige, Little, Brown, & Co, New York, 2006, hardback 276 pages.**

If you were to write a book about your career, or your day at work, what might you write about the judge, superintendent, supervisor or director? Well, listen to what a career Public Defender has to say about judges (good and bad), probation officers, prosecutors, corrections staff and others associated with criminal justice in Bronx, New York. He does not mince words or protect anyone by using made up names. For example, on page 208, Judge Harold Adler is "one of the completely unpredictable judges. Almost anything could happen in his court. Adjudication in his court is a crapshoot. Gnomish and wild eyed, with a scraggly salt and pepper beard and crazy, unkempt hair, Adler has moments of intense decency that are regularly followed by bouts of ferocious irrationality and utter implacability that can make him one of the least pleasant judges to appear before." Court staff and lawyers simply "don't have a clue as to what sets him off." Hopefully, nothing in this book will remind you of a Roanoke, Richmond or Radford court or even the disparity between courtroom A or B or C in your courthouse.

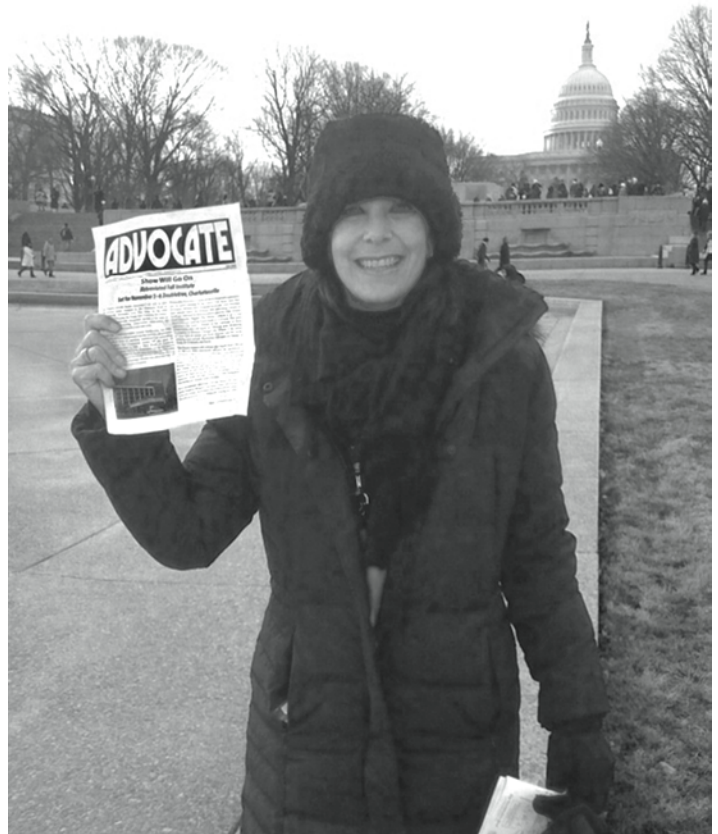
In another courtroom with another Public Defender case on the same day is Judge R. Rivera. The Honorable R. Rivera, a judge who "could be trouble" is referred to as a character out of *Star Trek*. He "was all about appearances" and seemed to conclude "based on the clothing alone that the kid was guilty or menacing." Moreover, "the transcripts of his cases were monuments to the stupidity of his insistent need for explanation."

This 'journey' is a tale of one day offered by a career public defender who graphically shares what he does to balance the system, to offer honest defense for the indigent defendant fighting against the all powerful prosecutor and the unlimited police support that accompanies any arrest, regardless of how minor. This book can both entertain and educate. The entertaining style is similar to that in watching CSI, NCIS, House, Dirty Jobs, or other 'job' shows.

Indefensible is more than another lawyer book. It tells cop stories better than those on the COPS reality TV show. The 'good guy' police and some not so nice gang cops / narcotics cops are highlighted. Just as with the judges, many of the other actors in the drama of an urban criminal court are most honorable and true preservers of the peace. Others are, well, perhaps 'evil' might be an apt term. Some remind this author of Judge Diane Kiesel, the judge who doles out punishment "with an undertakers glee." Feige offers a believable, if not

frustrating, account of what is referred to as the "underbelly of a system out of control". Certainly the place where you work is nothing like the court system in N.Y., L.A., Chicago or other big cities. However, the public defender's role is the same. The Virginia public defenders role is well outlined at <http://www.publicdefender.state.va.us/>

Perhaps you will better understand your Assistant Commonwealths Attorney and the public defender after reading *Indefensible*. This is not a book that is *needed* in your office, JDH, JCC or other agency library. But, it may be an enjoyable quick read. The book can raise your level of sensitivity as to how we both protect and affect the lives of the citizens. Feige rants about the harm we can cause. He talks about evil. Being more aware of the 'do no harm' creed of all of our jobs might not be a bad 'take away' after spending a bit of time with this book.



The newsletter of choice at the Inaugural.

ADVOCATE

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Ask Uncle Buck

Uncle Buck claims to be a Licensed Professional Counselor specializing in work-related and personal issues. Please send your questions to Uncle Buck, P.O. Box 966, Churchville, VA, 24421.

Dear Uncle Buck: I am a former DJJ employee who was laid off

as a result of the recent budget cuts. I have landed a new job in the private sector where I make more money, have good benefits and job security, and even get a company car. My problem is that I feel guilty for leaving my former colleagues behind. Is this a normal reaction? — **Guilty in Galax.**

Dear Guilty: Survivor Syndrome is a mental condition that occurs when a person perceives himself to have done wrong by surviving a traumatic event. It may be found among survivors of combat and natural disaster, and in non-mortal situations among those whose colleagues are laid off. Normally the colleagues you left behind would be suffering Survivor Syndrome because you were laid off instead of them. In your case, the reverse is occurring. Guilt is not something found in Uncle Buck's emotional repertoire. Hopefully, your new benefits package includes mental health services. You are strange. — **Uncle Buck.**

Dear Uncle Buck: During the two week period before Christmas, one of my co-workers kept a Miniature Lop-Eared baby rabbit in our office. The little guy was a Christmas gift for her son and she hid the bunny at the office to maintain the element of surprise on Christmas morning. We all got very attached to this Mini Lop and now that he's gone we really miss him. How can we fill the void in our hearts now that we don't have this rabbit around any more? — **Bon Air Bunny Hugger.**



Dear Bunny Hugger: Mini Lops ARE cute little things and make excellent pets. They are also quite tasty when cooked in a brown stew and served with a nice white wine. Of course you could always go to your co-worker's house and rip Oswald from the loving bosom of the little child who is now his owner; but that might not leave you feeling very good about yourself. You could also go out and purchase your own Miniature Lop-Eared rabbit and keep him at work as an office pet. OR you could work out some visitation arrangement with the owner that allows the little fellow some time to be at the office during the week. Uncle Buck's suggestion would be for you to get a life. It's a *&^%#@! rabbit, for crying out loud. — **Uncle Buck**

Dear Uncle Buck: In 2004, I donated a kidney to my wife who was in dire need of a transplant. She recovered so well that she subsequently had multiple extra-marital affairs and I have now decided to file for divorce. My question is this: As part of the divorce settlement, should I ask for my kidney back? — **Pondering in Portsmouth.**

Dear Pondering: Your question encompasses many legal, medical, and ethical issues. Uncle Buck does not believe that a Divorce Court Judge would Order your wife to return your kidney; but it never hurts to ask. At best you might receive some monetary compensation, with the current going rate for a human kidney being \$1.5 million. Discuss this matter with a good divorce attorney; but remember this — she stole your heart before you gave her your kidney. — **Uncle Buck.**

Dear Uncle Buck: — She has done it again! For the third straight Christmas my supervisor has given her staff gifts that she obtained for free from vendors at the November VJJA Institute! Coffee mugs; pens; mouse pads; tote bags; all emblazoned with the names and logos of companies providing services to children! Does she not understand that we know where these items came from? That she got them for free and is passing them on to us as empty tokens of her appreciation? This year, she didn't even bother to wrap them! How can I tell my supervisor that we don't appreciate receiving these gifts? — **Insulted in Independence.**

Dear Insulted: My goodness, aren't you an ungrateful little twit. Would you have been happy if your supervisor had been trampled trying to buy you a flat screen Zenith at the local Wal-Mart? Nothing in the rule book says that your supervisor has to give you ANYTHING for Christmas. Uncle Buck has an extensive collection of the items you mentioned and finds them all to be both aesthetically appealing and functional. Stop whining and get back to work. — **Uncle Buck.**

Cash-strapped States Cut Juvenile Justice Programs

By Jim Davenport

COLUMBIA, S.C. (AP) — State budget cuts are forcing some of the nation's youngest criminals out of counseling programs and group homes and into juvenile prisons in what critics contend is a shortsighted move that will eventually lead to more crime and higher costs.

Tennessee, South Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia are among states that have slashed juvenile justice spending — in some cases more than 20 percent — because of slumping tax collections. Youth advocates say they expect the recession will bring more cuts next year in other states, hitting programs that try to rehabilitate children rather than simply locking them up.

“If you raise a child in prison, you’re going to raise a convict,” said South Carolina Juvenile Justice Director Bill Byars, credited with turning around a system once better known for warehousing children than counseling them and teaching them life skills.

Now, he’s been asked to draw up plans to trim an additional 15 percent from a juvenile justice budget already cut \$23 million, or 20 percent, since June as part of the state’s effort to pare \$1 billion from its \$7 billion budget.

All five of the system’s group homes — which generally house less-violent offenders and give them more individual attention — have been shuttered. Also gone are some intensive youth reform and after-school programs in detention facilities.

The story is similar in other states. Kentucky is nixing a boot camp-style program developed by the National Guard. Virginia is losing behavioral services staff and a facility that prepares children to go home after serving time, along with smaller camps and community programs. Juveniles in those programs will return to traditional correctional facilities.

“It’s not like we’re going to say, ‘OK, let’s close a juvenile detention center,’ or something like that,” said Gordon Hickey, spokesman for Virginia Gov. Timothy M. Kaine. “We have to reduce spending across the state, and the governor looked at suggestions and recommendations from all departments. He certainly realizes that all of these reductions have consequences. The idea is to limit the damage as much as possible.”

Among the programs being cut in South Carolina is one that Lex Wilbanks, an 18-year-old arrested four years ago on drug and gun charges, credits with giving him back his future.

Before moving to the program run by Florida-based nonprofit Associated Marine Institute, which provides intensive

counseling and wilderness camps in several states, Wilbanks spent four months in a regular juvenile detention center.

“When you did something wrong or you fight or you disrespect staff, they just throw you into lockdown,” Wilbanks said. “They just throw you in and make them fight to survive. You’re just making them a hardened criminal.”

In South Carolina, only 22 percent of offenders who go through the institute’s program later break the law, less than half the recidivism rate for juveniles in large state facilities, Byars said.

Through the program, Wilbanks worked his way to the top rank in Army Junior ROTC and earned a GED and college credits. Acting up brought meetings during which counselors “talk you through problems and how you can actually change,” he said. “It gives you hope.”

Florida is also axing three Associated Marine Institute programs to save \$1.7 million, part of an effort to cut 4 percent, or \$18 million, from the juvenile justice budget. Advocates are bracing for additional cuts as legislators go back to the Capitol in January to deal with a \$2 billion state budget hole.

Florida’s juvenile justice system “is going to die the death of a million 4 percent cuts,” said Jacqui Colyer, who leads a state juvenile justice advisory group.

The picture isn’t as bleak everywhere. A court order limits the cuts California can make and Minnesota, Massachusetts and Nebraska haven’t made serious cuts to their systems. Other states, including Connecticut, Oregon, New Hampshire and Utah, are making more modest cuts or delaying planned spending.

Advocates say they worry most about losing programs, such as group homes, that take children out of large facilities to give them individual attention.

Juvenile facilities see an array of major and minor criminals. Gun, drug, sex and assault offenders may share sleeping quarters and classes with teen pranksters sentenced for disrupting schools or destroying property. Terms can last weeks or, in extreme cases, until youths become adults and are transferred to adult prisons.

Generally, less violent offenders make it to the smaller group homes, and experts say social pecking orders are easier to defuse in those settings compared to prisons where gangs try to form and fight for control.

Sheila Bedi, executive director of the Washington-based Justice Policy Institute, said housing children can cost as much as \$600 per child daily. But the expenses can be much higher when children emerge hardened from big youth prisons, commit more crimes and end up in adult facilities.

"The truant comes out learning how to steal a car," Bedi said. "You cannot expect a child to come out of that situation with the ability to make better life decisions."

Reprinted from the December 26, 2008 edition of the New York Times

Views

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The results of closing the Commonwealth Center and eliminating the adolescent beds at SWVMHI will not be good. Many children will not get the services they need; a LOT of them. What will become of these kids? If you have worked in the field of Juvenile Justice for any length of time, you know the answer to that question. These kids will be criminalized; charged with delinquent offenses and placed in secure detention for the protection of themselves and others. As good as they are, detention center employees across Virginia are not equipped to deal with an influx of actively psychotic kids.

No one argues that the Commonwealth of Virginia needs to cut spending, which means the elimination of programs and positions to stay afloat in these difficult times. But do we have to do it by depriving mentally ill kids of their only safety net? It just doesn't seem like Virginia's style.

2009 Virginia Summer Institute for Addiction Studies

The 2009 Virginia Summer Institute has been announced for July 20–22, 2009 at The College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. The theme for this year's event is Intervention & Treatment of Co-Occurring Addictions: Substance Abuse Disorders and Process Addictions. The Summer Institute will provide the opportunity to acquire twenty hours of CEUs necessary for licensure renewal in 3 days, rather than four days necessary in previous years. Please save the dates and visit www.vsias.org for further information as it becomes available.

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For further information,
contact your local FPS office
or the corporate office at
(800) 447-8709

2008 VJJA Meritorious Award Winners

Each year the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association recognizes professionals who have made extraordinary contributions in the juvenile justice field. On November 6, 2008, at VJJA's 32nd Fall Training Institute, Meritorious Service Awards were presented in the Categories of Administration, Community Service, Court Services, and Residential Services. If you missed the November Institute, here is what was said about this year's Winners.

Career Public Servant Honored for Work in Juvenile Justice Field



"Our next award recipient is a career public servant with more that 30 years in the areas of juvenile justice and human service programs and operations. She has served in many progressively responsible roles to include serving as line staff in a juvenile correctional center, Institutional Counselor and Supervisor, Regulatory Program Manger, Chief of Operations, Regional Administrator, and Court Service Unit Director.

She received her undergraduate degree from Virginia State University in 1975 and earlier this year earned a Master of Business Administration degree through the University of Phoenix. She is a member or past member of the following groups: the Council on Juvenile Correctional Administrators, the American Correctional Association, the National Association of Juvenile Correctional Agencies, the Child Welfare League of America, the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the Virginia Juvenile Justice Association.

Some of her many significant accomplishments include being elected by her peers to the Executive Committee of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators and facilitating community support in the building of a \$32 million, 80 bed pre-trial secure juvenile facility.

Until recently this member was the Director of Court Services at the Chesterfield Court Service Unit. She is now the Director of Strategic Planning for the VA Department of Criminal Justice Service (DCJS). Please join me in congratulating this year's **Meritorious Award Winner in the Area of Administration, GAYLE TURNER.**"

Former System-Involved Youth Honored for Service to the Community



"For those who entered the field of juvenile justice believing that people can change, and that despite getting off to a rough start children involved in the delinquency system can grow into positive and productive young adults, this recipient is a living testament and a reminder most children age out of delinquent behavior and that children are not yet who they will become.

A former foster care child, probationer, and resident of Bon Air Juvenile Correctional Center, our recipient is now a college graduate, a social worker, a youth advocate, a full-time graduate student, a homeowner, a biological and foster care parent — all of this by age 27.

Despite significant hurdles during childhood and adolescence, as a young adult our recipient has worked as a Family Crisis Stabilization Worker, assisting children and families experiencing the same challenges she once faced. A passionate advocate who leads with both her head and her heart, she has participated in the Hampton community's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) and has been a part of efforts to reduce an over-reliance on secure confinement and other out of home placements.

In June our recipient was named the 2008 Virginia Spirit of Youth award winner. The award recognizes and celebrates a young adult who has made great strides following involvement with the juvenile justice system; has overcome personal obstacles; and is making significant contributions to society. This summer she addressed a group of juvenile court judges at a national conference sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. She spoke about her experiences as a child placed in foster care, group homes, detention homes and correctional centers, and challenged members of the judiciary to exhaust all community-based options before removing children from their homes.

This is surely not the last that we will hear from our recipient. Her latest venture is the launching of a website and she is penning a book about her experiences in the dependency and delinquency systems.

Our recipient benefited from a foster care mother who in her own words “loved me without limits through all of my pain” and “gave me hope when I had no hope left for myself.” She is now performing the ultimate community service by “paying it forward” and giving other young people hope when they need it most.

We are proud to have her as a VJJA member and as a colleague. Please help me congratulate the **2008 Meritorious Award Winner in the Area of Community Service, ANGEL BARTLETT.**

VA Beach Probation Officer Honored for Work in Court Services



“This probation officer has been with the Department of Juvenile Justice almost 10 years. She has consistently done an exceptional job and been a role model for new probation officers. She took the lead in her unit’s gang initiative and became gang certified. She developed a resource manual for her Court Service Unit with everything workers needed to know about gangs and particular sets their area. She works closely with the police department and

they regularly call her with information on juveniles who are gang-involved. She manages a regular caseload plus intensively supervises gang-involved youth in the CSU’s Phoenix program. She averages over 300 contacts a month all while staying current in BADGE! (her Department’s automated case management system). She not only works with probationers in the traditional way — she has taken them biking, rock-climbing, fishing, bowling, and to sporting events. She always tries to find a way to get through to young people and does not just sit in her office and wait for them to come to her.

This past spring our recipient was working with a gang member and made a home visit. She found the family living in an apartment that was unkempt and lacking basic necessities. There was no soap, shower curtain, dishes, and very limited furniture. Her client did not even have a bed. Struck by what she had seen, she decided to do a “home makeover” for this

family. She “rallied the CSU troops” and received numerous donations — money, linens, dishes, televisions, a bed, rugs, curtains, pictures, tables and a couch. Four workers descended on the apartment one morning and spent the day cleaning, moving, and decorating. The gang member came home that afternoon and cried when he saw how his “home” had been transformed. He realized that people, other than his gang members, cared about him. He went in his bedroom (with a real bed!) and just sat, amazed at what his probation officer had done. It was an unbelievably touching experience for all involved and a major life-changing event for this family. This is just one example of this probation officer thinking “outside the box” when it comes to providing services and going above and beyond.

This recipient is said to be an extraordinary professional who consistently exhibits “best practices” in all she undertakes. Her supervisor describes her as “a motivated and caring probation officer”. She continued, “Her compassion extends to all those she comes in contact with — she is a wonderful wife, mother to two toddlers, daughter, colleague, and friend. She is most deserving of this reward.

Please help me congratulate the **2008 Meritorious Award Winner in the Area of Court Services, DONNA BAKER.”**

Detention Superintendent Honored for Work in Juvenile Justice Field



“This year’s recipient of the Meritorious Service Award in the category of Residential Services is a great cook, a less-than-great golfer, and an art connoisseur. A graduate of East Tennessee State University, our Award Winner is a long time VJJA member who spent 24 years in the department store business before entering the juvenile justice field in June of 1997.

As Superintendent of the Shenandoah Valley Juvenile Center in Staunton, this gentleman oversaw the construction of a \$9.5 million, 55-bed state of the art facility which opened its doors in September, 2003. He and his detention commission held down construction costs by managing the project internally rather than hiring a general contractor. The result was one of the first “green” detention centers in the country and its designation by “Youth Today” magazine as “the best designed new juvenile detention center in the United States.”

Award, continued on page 12

Award

Continued from page 11

Coming from the private sector, this year's Award Winner brought to his new job a keen business sense and no pre-conceived notions about the limitations of juvenile detention. With this open mind, he is always looking for ways to improve the System and better serve youth. In June of 2005, our Winner stepped up to work with the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice in offering the Community Placement Program at his facility for non-violent offenders committed to the Department.

In June of 2005, this VJJA member volunteered his detention center to house Virginia's first Detention Re-Entry Program to help transition youth from the juvenile correctional centers back to the community. With average daily detention populations on the decline, this year's Award Winner reached out to the Community Policy & Management Teams in his service area offering to renovate two 10-bed pods in the detention center to meet whatever needs the community felt were necessary. On October 9, 2008, the Shenandoah Valley Assessment & Shelter Care Center opened its doors to help kids at risk of out of home placements stay in their communities.

Our 2008 Award Winner is currently serving as Vice Chair of VJJA's Valley District, and is in his second term as Treasurer

of the Virginia Council on Juvenile Detention. Admired as a fiscal conservative by his fellow Detention Superintendents, one colleague notes, "The last time this guy opened his wallet, a moth flew out wearing an Eisenhower button."

He lives in Harrisonburg with his wife, Cartha, and they are the proud parents of three daughters. It is my privilege to present VJJA's **2008 Meritorious Service Award in the category of Residential Services to TIM SMITH.**



Juvenile Justice Expert and Former VJJA Award Winner Dies at 71

Robert E. Shepherd Jr., professor emeritus at the University of Richmond's School of Law and a national leader in legal issues affecting children and families, died Dec. 11 after a battle with cancer. He was 71.

In 1961, he wrote a paper supporting a law that would hold parents of children born out of wedlock financially responsible for them. It became a draft of Virginia's first statute on child abuse and set the course for his career. In 1971, he joined the Virginia Attorney General's Office, where he represented the state's Division of Youth Services, the precursor of today's Department of Juvenile Justice.

He was a prime architect of the 1977 revision of the state juvenile code and of the state's statutes on special education and child abuse and neglect.

A founder of the UR law school's National Center for Family Law and a member of its board, Mr. Shepherd was sought after as an expert in courts, before legislative committees and in legal forums across the nation on issues related to children's rights. He also served on many boards including the Governor's Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice.

Among numerous plaudits, he received the Child Advocacy Award from the National Association of Counsel for Children, he was the first person inducted into the Virginia Juvenile Court Hall of Fame, he received the American Bar Association's Livingston Hall Juvenile Justice Award and the National Center for Family Law created a scholarship in his honor. He was also a former VJJA Award winner having been awarded in 1983 with the association's Meritorious Award in the Area of Community Service.

Study to put Va. Juvenile Justice Issues Before Lawmakers

By Tim McGlone

Three years after ordering a widespread study of juvenile justice, state legislators had hoped to make improvements and repairs to a system that appears unfair to minorities and inconsistent from court to court.

But other legislators say now is not the time to make changes.

The Virginia State Crime Commission has been studying the juvenile justice system since 2006. It's the first look at the system since major changes were made 12 years ago by the General Assembly, at a time when juvenile crime was at its peak.

Since then, juvenile crime has dropped in Virginia about 34 percent, but there were significant spikes in robberies and homicides between 2006 and 2007, and experts project youth crime to begin increasing again in the coming years.

A final report is scheduled to be delivered to General Assembly members by the first day of the session, Jan. 14.

Preliminary findings were presented to the Crime Commission at its recent meetings, last month and in October. Some commission members indicated that another year of study might be needed. Others, though, said the findings showed that the changes made last decade have succeeded.

State Sen. Ken Stolle, R-Virginia Beach and the commission vice chairman, said the data in the study show "policies that apparently are working."

The commission's study, conducted by its staff, revealed that black children are twice as likely as whites to be committed to juvenile correctional centers.

This disproportion "may result from school policies, targeting of crime-ridden neighborhoods, inability of the indigent to retain paid counsel, and lack of available prevention opportunities and alternatives to detention," the study said, citing a 2005 state juvenile justice report.

The study also found that recidivism rates, or the number of juvenile offenders who commit new crimes, increase significantly when juveniles are tried in Circuit Court. The study cited a national report that contained the same conclusion.

Among the significant changes to emerge from the 1996 reforms was a lowering to 14 the age a youth can be tried as an adult for certain crimes. For violent crimes, prosecutors have sole discretion whether to transfer a juvenile from Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court to Circuit Court, where the penalties are more severe and opportunities for reform are fewer.

Most of Virginia's public defenders — 93 percent — who responded to a Crime Commission survey recommended that the General Assembly remove certain violent crimes, including rape, robbery and felony homicide, from a list of those eligible to be transferred to Circuit Court. First- and second-degree murder would remain on the list.

Most also believe Juvenile and Domestic Relations Court judges should decide whether a juvenile should be transferred to adult court, not prosecutors.

The commission report recommends to the General Assembly that the transfer issue be re-examined, but it stops short of recommending the wholesale changes that the public defenders would prefer. Nearly all commonwealth's attorneys who responded to the survey opposed any transfer changes.

National research, including that just conducted by the Bush administration's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, suggests that treating children as adults increases the odds of recidivism.

"The practice of transferring juveniles for trial and sentencing in adult criminal court has, however, produced the unintended effect of increasing recidivism, particularly in violent offenders, and thereby promoting life-course criminality," a 2008 report by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention said.

Andrew K. Block Jr., legal director of the JustChildren Program at the Charlottesville-based Legal Aid Justice Center, said in an interview Friday that the bottom line is to balance fairness with public safety.

"More checks and balances on the decision to try children as adults in Virginia will make sure that only those young people who truly require adult convictions and adult confinement receive these consequences," he said. "It's a really hard problem to address."

Block and other advocates for juveniles, some of whom testified at the commission's last meeting, pushed for more prevention and treatment programs, but the legislators said there will be no new funding.

"I don't think there's going to be any substantive legislation this session," Block said.

As of Friday, (1/2/09) no juvenile justice legislation had been pre-filed.

Reprinted from the January 5, 2009 edition of the Virginian Pilot.

Colleagues In the Spotlight

Pam Holland, JS Counselor II / Outreach, Newport News Juvenile Services, was selected her employer's "Making a Difference" Employee of the Quarter for Fall 2008. Holland was also selected as the 2008 Making a Difference Employee of the Year. (December 2008)



Nancy Fleming has returned to the Department of Juvenile Justice's Reception & Diagnostic Center. After a few years of commuting long distance to serve as the Assistant Superintendent at the Culpeper Juvenile Correctional Center, Fleming has been appointed as Assistant Superintendent at the Reception & Diagnostic Center. Fleming previously worked in RDC's Special Placement Unit.



After spending eight years in the Navy, Capital District Member **Jim (Jim) Nankervis** started his career in juvenile justice at the Chesterfield Detention Home. From there he went to work for the Chesterfield Court Service Unit. Nankervis has held nearly every position at the CSU which was good training for his recent promotion to Court Service Unit Director. Nankervis served as faculty during the association's recent 32nd Fall Institute.



Gayle Turner, Capital District, has accepted the position of Director of Strategic Planning with the Department of Criminal Justice Services. Prior to accepting her new position Turner was employed by the Department of Juvenile Justice as the Director of Court Services for the Chesterfield Court Service Unit. Turner was also recently honored by the association and presented VJJA's 2008 *Meritorious Award in the Area of Administration*.



Long time Tidewater member **Diane (Floyd) Shelton** has retired as a Probation Supervisor with the Virginia Beach Court Service Unit. She had worked for the CSU since 1976. Shelton began her work as a Probation Officer and later became a Group Coordinator. She developed and implemented the "Street Law" program for the CSU. In 1989, she was named the association's *Probation Officer of the Year*. Shelton has been an active VJJA member for 33 years, serving in numerous leadership capacities. For several years she served as Editor of a regional newsletter the "Court Jester" and as State Conference Chair. For more than two decades she organized Tidewater "Spring Fling" (a training event that included an annual volleyball tournament). She served as Chair of the Tidewater District Spring Institute for 15 years.



Read about other *Colleagues in the Spotlight* at: www.vjja.org/eAdvocate/Winter2009

Just Us

Continued from page 4

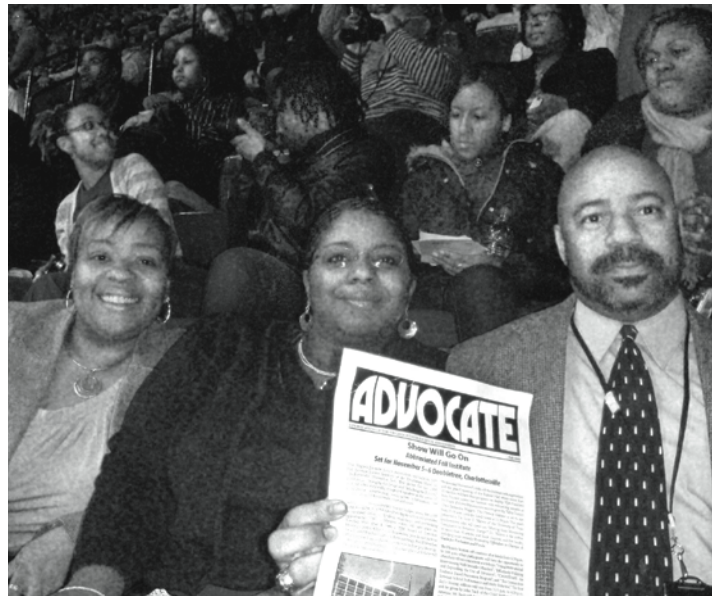
or colorful. Leave your emotions with the phonebook and for goodness sake don't take a threatening posture. "I'll vote the bum out" is not a phrase that will be repeated. When you present a fly to the trout you don't want your line to slap the water or for it to rapidly sink under its own weight.

Phone calls do have influence but nothing is better than face-to-face contact. People who care enough to show up, taking their time to present themselves on an issue, whether directly or indirectly (aide) to the legislator, have greater influences. You can practice fishing all you want on your front lawn but if you really want to catch something you have to go to the stream. That doesn't mean you have to track down the committee schedule and drive to the capitol every time you want to be heard on a bill. Constituent offices are staffed in many locations; drop by and say, "Howdy," and while you're there talk about the things that interest and affect you and children.

Currently there are over two dozen pieces of legislation that will affect children and the business of juvenile justice. They are not being advertised as juvenile justice legislation — you don't think trout put up signs saying where they are do you? Go to the legislative website and you can find everything you might be looking for and more. I have an opinion on all the current bills and have stated my opposition to several vehemently. Send me an email (Erich@Telsch.com) and I'll let you know which ones I want to keep in my creel and which ones I would throw back. Legislation is a lot like catch and release fishing without needing a license. You may get your hands dirty and still be hungry and smell a bit at the end of the day but what a reward when you finally land that rainbow.



Courtesy of Jim McCloskey and the Staunton News Leader



The newsletter of choice at this Obama rally.

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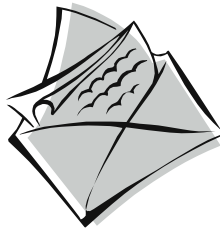
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Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor:

On behalf of Blue Ridge Juvenile Detention, I want to thank VJJA for the Christmas gifts that were sent our way! It was very thoughtful of the organization to sponsor "Operation Holiday" and much appreciated by both staff and residents. I hope that you enjoy the enclosed thank you cards prepared by some of our residents. Have a great 2009!

Cathy Roessler
BRJD Programs Coordinator
Charlottesville, VA

Membership Renewal Tip:

Renew YEARS in advance!
Eight current VJJA
members have already
renewed through the
2010-11 membership
year!



Colleen French visits the Donkey Sanctuary in Bonaire, Netherlands Antilles.