

# VIRGINIA JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSOCIATION

## History Part 1: 1966 – 1976

### *Birth and Early Development*

*(This is the first in a four part series on the history of VJJA.)*

During the first half of the 1960s, the Virginia Council on Social Welfare (VCSW) was the predominant, if not the only, professional association in Virginia addressing the issues of people working with troubled children. But for many professionals working with Virginia's juvenile offenders, the VCSW was not meeting their needs. These were the days of Lyndon Johnson's 'Great Society,' and social programs were greatly expanding. Seminars and networking opportunities provided by the VCSW centered on clear social work issues; and the needs of juvenile offenders were not being addressed to the satisfaction of juvenile probation officers in the Commonwealth.

In November of 1965, Christian P. Napoli, Supervisor with the Richmond Juvenile Court Service Unit, sent a letter to each of Virginia's Chief Juvenile Probation Officers requesting their attendance at a meeting at the Richmond Juvenile Court on December 15, 1965. "During the past year," Mr. Napoli's letter read in part, "interest has been generated by Juvenile Court staff in forming a Virginia State Juvenile Officers Association. The purpose is to encourage active participation of professional staff dealing with persons under the age of 18 years, that they may render a more valuable service to people of the State of Virginia and courts which they serve."

Present at the December 15, 1965 meeting were: Mr. Napoli; David Katz; Gordon Turner; David Piercy; Woody Greene; Bud Hare; Vince Picciano; Laverne Taylor; Marvin Hendrick; Jim Bryant; Giles Lambert; Boston England; Bruce Butts; Jim Duke; Bill Weddington; Pete Hare; Austin Micklem; and Doug Clark. Mr. Napoli acted as chairman of the meeting and each person in attendance was given the opportunity to express ideas and concerns. On a motion by Bruce Butts, seconded by Jim Bryant, the group voted to "go ahead and begin a new association that would be open to juvenile court staff and detention home personnel." On a motion by Doug Clark, seconded by Marvin Hendrick, it was decided that the new association would be called "The Virginia State Juvenile Corrections Association." Mr. Napoli was elected temporary chairman of the Association, and he in turn appointed the following committees: Constitution and By-Laws – Vince Picciano (Chair), Woody Greene, Laverne Taylor, and Bud Hare; Nominating – Marvin Hendrick (Chair), Jim Bryant, Gordon Turner, and David Katz; Membership – Bruce Butts (Chair), Boston England, Giles Lambert, and David Piercy. The group agreed to meet again in April, 1966, in conjunction with the VCSW Conference at the Hotel Roanoke.

On April 27, 1966, with a war raging in Southeast Asia and college campuses ready to explode in protest, it was a rainy afternoon when Chris Napoli called the first Virginia State Juvenile Corrections Association meeting to order in a small meeting room at the Hotel Roanoke. Mr. Napoli was elected President; Bruce Butts, Vice-President; Marvin Hendrick, Treasurer; and E.L. "Woody" Greene, Secretary. The Board voted to change the name of the association to the Virginia Juvenile Officers Association (VJOA), and agreed that the VJOA Board members would serve one year terms. Annual dues were established at \$2.00.

To give some structure to the fledgling association, a District Lines Committee, Chaired by David Piercy, was appointed to establish VJOA Districts around the state. The Committee recommended that the state be divided into seven Districts and in June of 1966, Mr. Napoli appointed the first District Chairs: District I, Bill Ralston; District II, Agnes White; District III, Ray Mastracco; District IV, John Willis; District V, Elwood Bostic; District VI, Laura Terry; and District VII, Betty Dallas. Each District Chair was to be represented on the VJOA Board.

By September 28, 1966, VJOA had 112 members. The Board met again on October 4, 1966, and December 6, 1966. The early struggles centered on divorcing VJOA from VCSW. Many wanted this to happen sooner rather than later; but gaining its own identity would not be easy. Early legislative issues ranged from the potential ramifications of the landmark case *Kent v. U.S.*, to sponsoring a facility for emotionally disturbed juvenile offenders.

At the March 16, 1967 Board meeting, the Board voted to move Pittsylvania, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties from VJOA District VII in with District V; and the remainder of District VII in with District VI. This eliminated District VII and left the Association with six Districts. Also at this March meeting, Marvin Hendrick recommended the appointment of a Publication Committee for the purpose of publishing a quarterly newsletter. It would be seven and a half years, however, before the first *Advocate* would be printed. Mr. Hendrick also proposed an emblem for VJOA. While the logo was adopted by the Board, it was suggested that the succeeding VJOA President appoint a committee to study changes in the emblem. The wording on the first logo read: "The Welfare of the Child is the Paramount Concern of the State."

At the April 27, 1967 business meeting, the following officers, who ran unopposed, were unanimously elected: President, Bruce Butts; Vice-President, E.L. Greene; and Secretary, Marvin Hendrick. The nomination from the floor of David Parks for Treasurer required that ballots be mailed to the 152 members, and James Bryant was subsequently elected Treasurer. In September of 1967, Mr. Bryant resigned his position, and Mr. Parks was appointed to serve out the term. Also at the September meeting, Ray Mastracco brought forth the idea of awarding certificates to VJOA members who made outstanding contributions to the Association, or exhibited exemplary service. These would evolve to become the Meritorious Service Awards currently awarded each year by VJJA.

On April 5, 1968, a new VJOA logo was presented by Les Tignor and approved by the Board. The second annual business meeting was held on May 1, 1968 at the Golden Triangle Hotel in Norfolk, where nominations from the floor required ballots to be mailed out to the 180 members. Out of the 136 ballots returned, the following officers were elected: Vince Picciano, President; Les Tignor, Vice-President; Ray Mastracco, Secretary; and Robert Ault, Treasurer.

The Board held three more meetings in 1968: June 7; August 8; and December 4. The first VJOA Institute, separate and apart from the VCSW, was held October 3-4 at the Presidential Motor Inn in Lynchburg. At the August meeting, an Awards Committee was appointed which recommended at the December meeting to present awards in three categories: Institutions; Probation; and Administration. It was also decided to have the annual business meeting in conjunction with the Annual Institute.

In 1969, the annual Institute was held on August 22-23 at the Ingleside Hotel in Staunton. By then, membership had grown to 225. The Department of Welfare & Institutions underwrote the Institute for \$2,000 to help with the cost of speakers. A revised Constitution was presented at the 1969 business meeting which included the following major changes: the establishment of professional and associates memberships, with professional members paying \$4.00 dues and associates paying \$2.00; and allowing for the terms of the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer to be two years. Bruce Briggs was elected President; Ray Mastracco, Vice-President; Giles Lambert, Secretary; and Scott Harlow Treasurer.

The Association ended the decade of the 1960s with 230 members and began the 1970s with both professional and associate members. VJOA continued to push for a residential treatment center to serve emotionally disturbed children and lobbied to have the state mileage rate increased from 9 to 12 cents per mile. Two Institutes were held in 1970: the Spring Institute with 113 registrants at the Downtowner Motel in Charlottesville, April 8-9; and the Fall Institute attended by 140 registrants at the Admiralty

Motel in Norfolk, September 23-25. By the time of the September 25, 1970 business meeting, the Association had 281 professional and 58 associate members.

1971 also brought two VJOA Institutes: the Spring Institute was held May 13-14 at the Howard Johnson Motor Inn in Richmond; the Fall Institute was held September 15-17 at the Sheraton in Fredericksburg. The Fall Institute of 1971 is most noteworthy because it was the first time VJOA presented awards. A "Blue Ribbon Panel" decided the award winners, a panel comprised of: Dean Richard Lodge, VCU; Delegate Stanley Walker from Norfolk; and Paul Keve, Director of the Communications & Safety Department in Washington, D.C. The winner of the 1971 Administration Award was Bob Truitt, Superintendent of the Tidewater Detention Home. The Probation Award went to Harry Campbell with the Fairfax Court. No Institutional Award was given. The year ended with Scott Harlow resigning as VJOA Treasurer in November, and David James being appointed to fill the vacancy. Legislatively, VJOA went on record as opposing legislation that would allow the jailing of juveniles at the court's discretion.

The New Year opened with wrangling at the January 10 Board Meeting. Representatives from District I (Northern Virginia) expressed concern that they "did not feel a part of VJOA;" citing the fact that they wanted an Institute held in Northern Virginia and Fredericksburg did not qualify. As a result, the site of the 1972 Fall Institute was changed from Williamsburg to the Holiday Inn at Tyson's Corner in McLean. 193 registrants attended the Fall Institute which was held October 4-6. The 1972 Spring Institute took place at the Afton Mountain Holiday Inn in Waynesboro on May 18-19. At the Fall Institute, Bill Weddington took home the Administration Award, and Peter Wright of the Richmond Court won the Probation Award. Again, no award was presented in the Institutions category. In the elections of 1972, Bob Truitt defeated Marvin Hendrick for President; Mike Lazzuri was unopposed for Vice-President; Agnes White won over Bill Ralston for Secretary; and David James was unopposed for Treasurer.

For the 1973 legislative session, the VJOA Board presented a position paper to the General Assembly outlining VJOA's opposition to sentencing juveniles to a detention facility. Additionally, the Association supported enforcement of minimum standards to ensure equality, consistency, and fairness in Virginia's juvenile justice system. Also in 1973, Harry Campbell resigned in frustration as the editor of the VJOA journal citing "lack of support from the Board and membership." The Spring Institute was held at the Hotel Roanoke, May 17-18, and had 140 registrants. The Fall Institute had 155 participants at Richmond's Virginia Inn in September. No awards were presented this year due to a "misunderstanding in the process." In late 1973, the Board began making plans to hold the 1974 Fall Institute at the Homestead in Hot Springs, a Five Star Hotel. There was much debate over this issue and the plan was met with "immediate resistance" from Department of Welfare and Institutions officials.

On July 1, 1974, the mileage rate for state employees was increased to 12 cents per mile; just months after VJOA supported a raise to 15 cents per mile. The Board drafted a resolution in support of keeping Appalachian Learning Center open, and also supported a study of the jailing of juveniles. In 1974, the question of changing the name of the Association first came before the Board and was defeated by a 2-1 vote with three abstentions. Vince Picciano was appointed editor of the VJOA journal, replacing Harry Campbell. In May, 225 participants attended the Spring Institute at the Holiday Inn Scope in Norfolk. The Fall Institute drew 235 registrants to the Natural Bridge Hotel in September. By the time of the 1974 Fall Institute, VJOA was boasting 695 professional and 75 associate members. That year, Bill Waters was honored in the category of Administration, and Julia Buck of the Pinecrest Learning Center won the Institutions Award. No award was presented for Probation. New officers for 1975-77 were elected with every race being contested: Bill Elder, President; David James, Vice President; Dean Kidwell, Secretary; and Les Tignor, Treasurer.

The year 1975 dawned with a doubling of the dues (\$8-Professional; \$4-Associate) and a drastic drop in VJOA membership within each District. By mid-year, the membership rolls had fallen to 337 professional and 23 associate members. The Membership Committee cited poor recruiting efforts, the dues increase, fewer agencies paying for memberships, tardiness in sending out membership applications, and the absence of an Association newsletter as reasons for the decline in membership. The overly ambitious idea of publishing a semi-annual journal of 120 pages was scrapped and the idea of a newspaper style publication was adopted. John Faircloth was named Chairman of the Editorial Committee and VJOA's publication was officially named the *Advocate*. The first issue of the *Advocate* was published in September, 1975, and 1,000 copies were printed for distribution to members and registrants at the Fall Institute. The front page headline of that first 8-page issue read, "Children's Rights Project of the A.C.L.U.," and the first *Advocate* contained an article on marijuana laws, District and Committee reports, the Association's By-Laws and Articles of Incorporation, and the first of a two-part interview with VJOA President Bill Elder. The price of the *Advocate* was 75 cents per issue with a year's subscription costing \$4.00. The 1975 Spring Institute was held in May at the Hotel Roanoke with 133 people in attendance. The 1975 Fall Institute was held in September at the Manassas Ramada Inn and 252 people attended. Awards for 1975 were presented to William Hamblen (Fairfax Court), Probation; and Agnes White (Henrico Court) and Ray Mastracco (Tidewater Regional Office), Administration.

By the end of 1975, membership had rebounded to 484 professional and 27 associate members. All things considered, VJOA's birth and early development were normal, and hopes were high for the Association's second decade. But the next ten years would test VJOA's strength and resolve like no other time in its history.

*In the next issue of the Advocate, we will take a look at: Part 2: 1976-1986, The Wonder Years.*