

JUNE 2012



11th Edition

# *The Merrimac Message*

**Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission**

*From the Corner Office...*

**“Strength is what you hope to find when you are put on a path you did not choose”**

— Anonymous

This quote seems so appropriate for many of the youth and families we serve, especially after my recent participation in a GED graduation ceremony for two of our residents. The celebration put together by our dedicated educational team was truly inspiring. From the caps and gowns, to the playing of Pomp and Circumstance, to the congratulatory speeches, to the beautifully worded acceptance remarks by the graduates, to the participation of families, to the very tasty food; every detail was thought of to make the grads and their families feel special for this amazing accomplishment. I continue to be impressed by the resiliency of our youth and their families, who so often must walk down a path they did not choose. I am humbled by their efforts and by the wonderful work of everyone who helped them reach this important milestone of success along the way. Congratulations to all!

Since our December newsletter we have gone through a busy six months. As our building nears its 15<sup>th</sup> birthday, it is starting to show signs of aging. Recently, our hot water heater and holding tank had to be replaced. Nancy Cludinski and her support team facilitated this process without any major interruptions for our residents. While capital maintenance and replacement costs can be high, we must maintain all aspects of the building for operational security and code compliance. My thanks to the Commission for supporting us in our quest to keep the facility in prime operating condition. In April, we also enjoyed another successful Spring Open House celebrating the contributions of our staff and volunteers to the Center. It was well attended with very creative talent performances by our residents, delicious food prepared by our own kitchen staff, and a successful plant sale by our Post-D team. A special thanks to Ms. Horne and Ms. Workman for their patience and persistence in putting the talent show together. Finally, I would like to report that we are now providing bed space for up to eight City of Richmond youth while their detention home is closed for the next year. This will not affect our ability to provide beds for our members and will be monitored closely by administration to ensure treatment and security are not compromised.

In closing, one final thought, to Team Merrimac.....Thank You!

Remember, as you run the race of life: “The prize does not always go to the swiftest, but to those who keep running”.

*Mike Sawyer*



## **SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:**

- Graduation
- Spring Open House
- Fencing Demonstration
- New Employees

## **NEW ADDITIONS**

Since our last newsletter, we have had the good fortune to welcome the following new employees to our team. Welcome to Merrimac!

**Travis Clark**

**Jessica Gadsden**

**Crystal Gaines**

**Ananias Moss**

**Rodney Taylor**

**Lavel Wideman**





## BEWARE THE IDES OF MARCH...

Merrimac students have been studying the history of theatre from Greece through the European Renaissance. The Tragedy of Julius Caesar by William Shakespeare surprised the students with its timely application of political intrigue and treachery. They learned that unlike today's theatre, the historical theatres required little costuming or set decoration. Only men and boys were allowed to perform on stage, and the characters wore masques (masks) to conceal their identity and to indicate to the audience their character's intentions.

We are pleased to announce the following employment milestones achieved so far in 2012:

**\*15 Years: Anita Browning \* 10 Years: Kenneth Hazard \* 5 Years: Kerline Antoine & Joseph Bucker**

Thank you all for your hard work and dedication!

*"The past is our definition. We may strive, with good reason, to escape it, or to escape what is bad in it, but we will escape it only by adding something better to it." ~ Wendell Berry*

It had been a long day. Mid-grumble about the sheer volume of paperwork on my desk, the phone rang. The voice on the other end was familiar and uncharacteristically cheerful. "I just wanted to say thank you." This is not something I typically hear when I answer my phone. It's more likely that my "Hello, this is Ms. Jones," will be met by a request, an FYI, a schedule conflict, a home pass clarification, a complaint, a worry, a parent who needs a sounding board, or a PO that needs an assessment or a favor.

It turned out to be the parent of a resident that had completed Post-D a year prior. "I just wanted to let you know he's graduating from High School tomorrow, and I wanted to say thank you and ask that you please pass on my thanks to all of the staff at Merrimac for working with him when he was most difficult." It was refreshing; my spirits were immediately lifted.

In the past week, I was informed that another previous resident had earned their GED and was offered a job at the Shipyard. A probation officer also called and said that she had run into a former Post-D resident that is thriving. She and her boyfriend are living together and raising their daughter. The resident stated that she is so grateful for the opportunity that she was given by being placed in the program. It was a chance to slow down and recognize the dangerous path she was on and get the help she needed to get her life back on track.

We know about the ones that don't do well. Despite their ability to prosper in the structured environment of Merrimac, there are those that aren't quite ready to face the challenges that await them in the community, those that aren't willing or ready to make life changes, those that are a victim of circumstance, and those that just make poor choices in a weak moment. We see them. They return to us to try again.

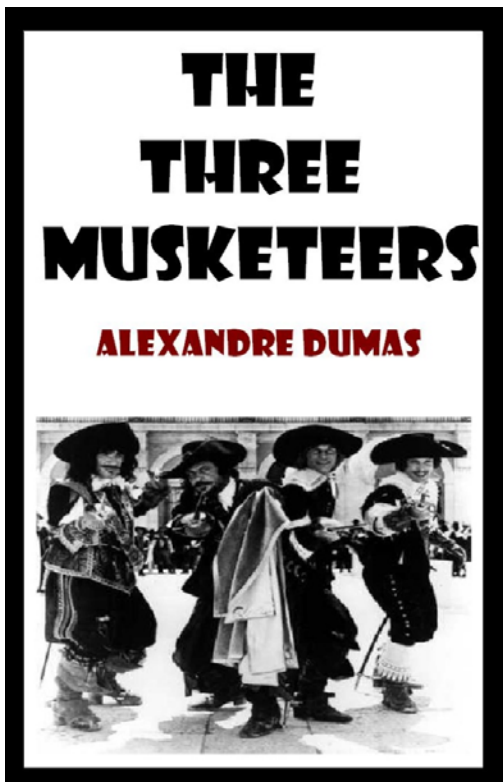
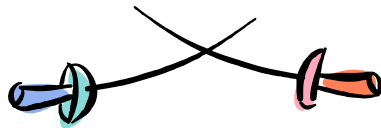
It's easy to feel like that's all there is, a revolving door of delinquency. Easy to lose sight of the fact that there is a multitude that do succeed, that we do make a difference and are a valuable asset to the success of our youth. Be sure to share the successes that you hear about. It could be exactly what one of your co-workers needs to hear. I encourage you to continue to offer your very best to each of the youth we serve, it could make all the difference!

— Sara Jones, Post-D Coordinator



## EN GARDE!

The Merrimac Education Department recently hosted the fencing club from William and Mary. Our students spent the month of March reading The Three Musketeers by Alexander Dumas. The Friday before spring break, the William and Mary fencing club came and gave a fencing demonstration to the students. The students had an opportunity to see all three types of fencing: Foil, Sabre, and Epee. The club explained how matches were scored, the origins of fencing and how the fencing arena was set up. The students then watched as the club members competed in a competition. The event was an excellent culminating activity to our reading.



## From the Kitchen: FRUIT PIZZA

This healthy & delicious treat is a favorite of our kitchen staff for summertime

### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 Can of Crescent Roll Dough
- 1 8 oz Whipped Topping
- 1 8 oz Cream Cheese, softened
- Your favorite fruit

Here are some suggestions:

- ◆ Strawberries
- ◆ Kiwi
- ◆ Pineapple
- ◆ Mandarin Oranges
- ◆ Blueberries

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Spread crescent roll dough onto 13" pizza pan. Pinch seams together. Bake until golden brown and allow to cool completely. Mix cream cheese with whipped topping and spread over crust. Slice and arrange fruit over the cream cheese mixture. Chill and enjoy!



# OPEN HOUSE 2012



The annual spring open house and Post-D plant sale was held on Friday, April 27th. Staff, guests and Post-D residents enjoyed a delicious lunch and desserts prepared by Merrimac's own kitchen staff. After opening remarks made by Mr. Sawyer, guests were treated to several performances by our residents. The program included an original rap, the singing of two different songs, one which was accompanied by live drums, the reciting of an original poem, and two performances of Shakespeare. As expected our residents, and the staff who helped prepare them, did a wonderful job.

