

JUL 2014



# ***THE MERRIMAC MESSAGE***

Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission

14th Edition

## UPCOMING TRAINING:

**Jul 17**

Suicide Prevention,  
Abuse & Neglect  
Reporting, Substance  
Abuse & Boundaries

**Aug 21**

Fire Extinguisher &  
Emergency Evacuation

**Sep 19 & 23**

Med Agent Refresher

**Oct 16**

CBT Refresher

*From the Corner Office...*

*"Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lots of others, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope" – Robert F. Kennedy*

Recently at our General Staff Meeting, I shared our year end statistics to give those caught up in the day to day business of caring for troubled youth an idea of what our individual efforts looked like as a group. My hope was to paint a complete picture few of us see while we are intensely involved in our own part of the Merrimac universe, whether that is direct care, education, mental health, support, or administration. Looking back I think this was a good thing, because numbers do count for budgets and statistics, BUT... what really shows that we are making a difference in the lives of our residents is how the kids and families respond to our efforts to effect change. As such, I thought it important to also share some of that feedback:

"All staff members were helpful/respectful.....I felt valued"

"They treated my daughter well"

"The Post-D program saved my son and my sanity"

"Staff at Merrimac is awesome"

"Keep up the good work helping children get another chance"

"All staff genuinely cared about my son"

"I felt confident my son was in a safe place"

"Staff was helpful, courteous, and professional"

To quote the central office of the Department of Juvenile Justice: "Merrimac is always on the forefront of best practice in juvenile detention". What more can I say? I am so proud of all of you and the efforts you make each day to reach out to these troubled youth and their families. Keep making ripples and hopefully the waves of change will follow...

Almost four years ago I came to Merrimac to hang my hat one last time on my journey in the field of Juvenile Justice. This is by far the best place I have ever worked and the best program I have had the honor of being associated with... thank you! In closing, I think Dr. King was speaking of Team Merrimac when he said this:

*"All labor that uplifts humanity has dignity and importance, and should be undertaken with painstaking excellence" – Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

Congratulations & thanks to the following Merrimac employees and teachers who reached milestones of service:

### **5 YEARS**

Gloria Woods  
Camillya Myles

### **10 YEARS**

Nancy Cludinski  
Brodrick Plummer  
Katrina Rogers

*Mike Sawyer*

Executive Director



# OPEN HOUSE 2014

On April 25th the Merrimac Center opened it's doors to volunteers, friends, and colleagues for our Spring Open House. Guests enjoyed a wonderful lunch prepared by our own kitchen staff and were treated to entertainment provided by some of our Post-D residents. The program included a speech from a former resident, the reciting of an original poem, an original rap, a group performance of "The Cup Song" by Anna Kendrick, a scene from "Romeo and Juliet", and ended with the singing of "Happy" by Pharrell. Staff, guests and residents joined in the fun making this one of the most lively and entertaining programs our residents have ever put together. Tours were available after the program for any guests who were interested. Plants from our greenhouse and hand-painted birdhouses were sold to raise funds for our Post-D program. It was a beautiful day to show our appreciation to all those who help make Merrimac a success!



Thank you to our kitchen staff for their hard work putting together a delicious lunch!



Joe, a former resident, spoke about his time here and how it helped him move forward



Mr. Sawyer (Director) and Mr. Whalen (Principal) chatting with law enforcement personnel and some of our volunteers from the college of William & Mary



# READ ACROSS AMERICA

“NEA’s Read Across America Day is a nationwide reading celebration that takes place annually on March 2—Dr. Seuss’s birthday. Across the country, thousands of schools, libraries, and community centers participate by bringing together kids, teens, and books”

[www.seussville.com](http://www.seussville.com)



This year residents and staff participated in the annual “Read Across America” event. We celebrated with a reading of “The Cat in the Hat” by our principal, Mr. Whalen. He was assisted by Mrs. Albert and Ms. Bailey , aka Thing 1 and Thing 2. Copies of the book were made available to all residents who wished to take one to read to younger siblings and friends when they depart from Merrimac.



## Congratulations & Welcome

Merrimac is pleased to announce the promotion of Vernice Redcross to Senior Cook. Vernice has been serving facility meals since 1997. We look forward to her continued service in her new role on the leadership team!

We would also like to announce our three newest team members Mr. Stewart Hudson has joined us as a part-time driver, Mr. Ron Warden is coming on board as a cook, and Mr. Beresford Callum, who was previously a part-time employee, now works full time for us as a Counselor. Welcome to Merrimac!

## From the Kitchen...

### Fruit Puree:

- 2 C fruit strawberries, blueberries, etc
- 1/2 C sugar
- Juice from 1 lemon

### Coconut Yogurt:

- 1 C plain thick yogurt
- 1 1/2 C powdered sugar
- 1 t coconut extract



### Directions:

Blend together the fruit, sugar, and juice until smooth. In a separate bowl whisk together the sugar, yogurt, and extract. Pour alternating layers into popsicle molds and insert sticks. Freeze about 8 hours.



## WORDS UNLOCKED

This poem, written by one of our residents, was submitted by Ms. Bailey to the 2014 Words Unlocked poetry competition. The competition includes month-long poetry lessons and is sponsored by the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings (CEEAS).

“The Words Unlocked 2014 theme is Boundaries. Boundaries exist in all shapes and forms; boundaries can be physical, social, emotional, or personal. Through Words Unlocked we hope to encourage thousands of students who are locked up to explore this theme and not let the boundaries prescribed by their locked rooms or the razor wire that they see every day limit their creativity, seriousness, or passion for writing and expression.”

[www.ceeas.org/words-unlocked](http://www.ceeas.org/words-unlocked)

## Boundaries Back Then, Right Now, and To Come

I emerged from the confines of my mother's womb in 1998  
Still innocent  
No sins committed  
The life that lay ahead of me was waiting to escape

My childhood was without restraint- chaos  
To the world around me I was quiet like a librarian  
On the inside I was wild, untamed, something like a barbarian

My teenage years had me in the bondage of roaring streets  
Smoking, hustling, and hunting for jewelry  
I got caught up catching somebody lacking over some foolery

Now I think about it when I sit in the boundaries of my cold-  
hearted cell, living hell  
All alone  
In only two years, I'll be considered grown

I see myself having grandkids  
Trapped in the body of an old man  
After a life that blossomed with beautiful boundaries  
I still do the best I can

My God-given sentence of imprisonment on Earth  
Becomes smooth death  
The grave's six foot long arms are waiting to grab me  
The afterlife is said to be boundary free  
So like my ancestors before me, I'll go gladly



## Mental Health Corner

Mental Health Corner is a wall visible to all who enter the secure part of our facility. Each month it changes to reflect a different topic. In recent months we focused on the following:

- January: Positive ways to maintain mental wellness
- February: Teen dating violence prevention and awareness
- March: National optimism month and self-harm awareness
- April: Stress awareness month
- May: Mental health month
- June: National rebuilding your life month



## PARENT SURVEY RESULTS 2013

After compiling all of the parent surveys from the past year, we are proud to share the results. Day by day we don't always hear the good things, and our jobs can be considered "thankless" by some. However, these results show that each staff member at Merrimac is appreciated.

With not one negative comment, I am so proud of the staff here and how they serve the kids and families at Merrimac. Please take the time to read the statistics and comments below to see how the parents really feel. It is awesome to receive such wonderful feedback regarding the hard work we do here!

We use a 5-point Likert scale to measure overall parent satisfaction with our services. Questions are asked about things such as our staff's level of professionalism, the services that we offer the residents, our visitation policy, and our timeliness in completing tasks for which the parents are included. An approval rating of 77.5% is incredibly high! We know that we can't always make everyone happy, but these numbers show that we really do our very best! Thank you!

Approval Rate:	77.5%	Disapproval Rate:	7.21%
No Opinion:	9.51%	Blank:	5.78%

***Gina Mingee, Assistant Director Program Services***

*"The staff here at Merrimac is awesome. Everyone has been terrific during my son's stay. I can't single out any one individual because you are all GREAT!! "*

*"A well-done learning experience for my child"*

*"My son appreciated the structure & consistency of the daily routine"*

*"They taught value, respect, and to obey authority figures, to take advantage of his opportunities and being a leader instead of a follower."*