

DEC 2012



12th Edition

# *The Merrimac Message*

## Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission

*From the Corner Office...*

**"Your actions should inspire others to dream more, learn more, and become more"**  
~John Quincy Adams

As we reflect on another year of our mission to provide a safe, secure learning environment for at-risk youth, it occurs to me that one of the greatest tools available to us for impacting our residents is succinctly put forth in the above quote by one of our founding fathers. Please take a moment to reflect on the powerful opportunity we have through daily interactions with residents to leave them with something more than a point sheet, level status, or court report. Rather, let us leave them with the inspiration to dream again and the hope of success in the future. Whether you realize it or not, I see this in your efforts every day. It is there in your positive attitudes, kind words of encouragement, and patient understanding of their hurtful behaviors. Please know that your role modeling may be the one constant in their life which allows them to be inspired and motivated to reach higher goals when they return to the community. Keep up the good work!

### NEW ADDITIONS

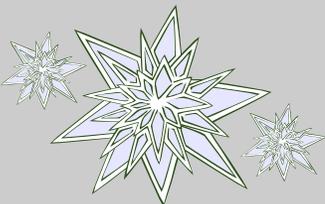
Since our last newsletter, we had the good fortune to welcome the following new team members to the Merrimac Center:

*Audias Armstrong*  
*James Booth*  
*Gene Bouscher*  
*Kimberly Bradsher*  
*Beresford Callum*  
*Stephanie Perry*  
*Michelle Quintana*  
*Jerry Watts*

As 2012 comes to a close, I am pleased with our success in meeting the goals of our mission statement, the needs of the Courts, and the programming standards for the Department of Juvenile Justice. We continue to operate in a dynamic budgetary environment where change and adjustment is more the rule than the exception. Intensive programming remains a strength of the Center while we expand our educational services and CBT program. We have participated in local, regional, and national juvenile justice forums throughout the year as we actively seek leadership roles in these areas. We are grateful to have the strong support of our Commission members who continue to provide oversight and leadership to enhance the operations of the Center.

Thank you all for a successful year and I look forward to many more. Please enjoy this holiday season with your families and know that you have impacted the lives of many.

*Mike Sawyer*



## STUDENTS ENGAGE IN HIGH-VELOCITY NOVEL WRITING

Soon after reading the non-fiction novel *Zeitoun*, students were ready to embark upon another monumental project: writing their own 15,000 word novel. Following the guidelines provided by the National Novel Writing Month's Young Writer's project, students signed an agreement pledging to meet "an absurd, month-long deadline". Students were encouraged to ignore notions of "craft", "brilliance" and "competency" until they are retrieved for the editing process.

According to teacher Les Hooker, following Chris Baty's (founder of NaNoWriMo) advice to "spend time" with their characters has allowed his students to experience the surprising rewards of writing for its own sake. According to Les, "plot simply happens" when the students develop interesting characters.

If you have always wanted to write, but just haven't gotten around to it, NaNoWriMo is the kick in the pants you've been waiting for!



~ Gail Albert, Literary Coach

Congratulations and thanks to the following Merrimac employees and teachers who reached milestones of service in 2012

### 5 YEARS

Kerline Antoine  
Joseph Bucker  
Karen Vaughan  
John Whalen

### 10 YEARS

Frank Beers  
Gerald Bland  
Kenneth Hazard

### 15 YEARS

Anita Browning  
Sherri Combs  
William Orris  
Jeannette Potter  
Vernice Redcross  
Jeff Smethurst

## FOCUS ON FITNESS

In September the Merrimac Center was pleased to welcome the addition of Kip Smith, physical education instructor, to our team. Before his arrival, residents regularly engaged in recreational activities such as basketball or volleyball, but this is the first introduction of a formal physical education class.

Mr. Smith focuses on the "Five for Life": Muscle Strength, Muscle Endurance, Cardio Endurance, Flexibility and Body Composition. Students are exposed to many different workout techniques and are instructed on the use of various equipment such as dynabands, balance balls and medicine balls. Team sports are enjoyed as a reward to students when they work hard in class.

According to Mr. Whalen, Principal at Merrimac, research shows that kids who are more physically active perform better academically. The regular workouts also provide residents with a positive way to release aggression. Going to the gym is no longer seen as an opportunity to harass one's peers. Instead it puts the focus on self-improvement and the encouragement of others.





ORIGINAL POETRY COMPOSED BY OUR RESIDENTS

*KATRINA*

The world has changed and will never be the same  
What a lovely place that was put to shame  
With horrible disasters that create long days  
We need to restore back to the victims from the hurricane  
~ J. R.

I beat, I feel, I love and care. I try my best  
not to get broken but it always fails. If you  
got a piece of me you'll remember me. I  
"live 2 love and love 2 live!"

~ M.C.

Thanks God for keeping me together when I'm falling apart\*  
~ T.P.



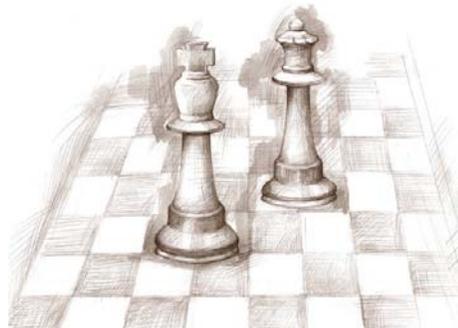
## CHECKMATE

During our time of enrichment, residents enjoyed learning to play the game of chess. Teacher Rei Flores first taught the basics: setting up the board, rules & objectives, and movement of the chess pieces. He then focused on tactics and strategies for winning the game, including opening principals, power of the pieces, controlling the center, forks, skewers, etc.

Once students were confident in their new skills, each of the four classes participated in a speed chess tournament; the winners of which were our 4 semifinalists. These students then participated in a tournament witnessed by staff and residents of the Center.

Basic rules for speed chess:

- Each player has a total of 3 min to complete all moves
- iPads were used with chess clock applications to track the time
- If time runs out; your opponent wins
- Players could also win with a checkmate



2 rounds of chess were played... The semifinal round was played simultaneously, followed by the final battle between the two victors. The winner finished with a brilliant checkmate, cornering the other's King.



Residents & staff at Merrimac celebrated the holiday season with the reading of "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. Five different sets of students, and even a few teachers, took turns reading the story, each playing a part. The performance was followed by a talent show including a guitarist, a poem composed by one of our students, and three original rap songs. Afterwards, refreshments were enjoyed by all.

## FROM THE KITCHEN

Having a holiday gathering this year? No party is complete without the perfect punch!

- *2 cups water*
- *3/4 cup granulated sugar*
- *1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon*
- *1 can (46 ounces) pineapple juice, chilled*
- *4 cups cranberry-apple juice, chilled*
- *1 liter ginger ale, chilled*



In a large saucepan, bring the water, sugar and cinnamon to a boil; stir until sugar dissolves. Chill. Just before serving combine the syrup mixture, juices and ginger ale in a punch bowl or large pitcher. Serve over ice. Yields 15-20 servings.



This holiday season the Merrimac Center plans to honor its staff with a luncheon at TGI Friday's, 12122 Jefferson Ave, Newport News

The celebration will take place on two different dates & times to allow all shifts an opportunity to attend:

**Tuesday- December 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:30AM**

**Wednesday-December 12<sup>th</sup> at 1:30PM**



Best wishes for a joyous holiday season and a prosperous New Year from all of us at Merrimac!

