

DEC 2013



# ***THE MERRIMAC MESSAGE***

Middle Peninsula Juvenile Detention Commission

13th Edition

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**Jan 15th**

Handle With Care  
Training

**Feb 19th**

Standard Universal  
Precautions Training

**March 20th**

Quarterly General  
Staff Meeting

**April 25th**

Spring Open House

*From the Corner Office...*

*“Sticks and stones may break my bones..... **but words can really hurt me**”*

Just a simple nursery rhyme, right? Something we learned as children to help us deal with the teasing of others can be rewritten with a slightly different emphasis, as I have done above, and become so remarkably descriptive of the youth and families we work with each day at Merrimac. We each make a decision every day as to how our conversations with others will proceed. Please stop and reflect on recent discussions and evaluate how you handled them. Were you sensitive and respectful? Were you honest but considerate? Did you try to reframe to achieve positive outcomes? Did you ask open-ended questions that provoked thought and discussion? Did you think ahead about how your words might be taken? Were you clear about expectations and did you take other's feelings into account? I could go on and on, but the point to remember is that in our role as professional child care workers, we must examine every word and phrase carefully before it leaves our mouths and lands directly on the heart, soul, and consciousness of others. Most, probably all, of our residents come to us damaged in so many ways by previous “verbal put downs”, carrying emotional wounds that have not healed and that could be reopened so easily. So let's do better! Make sure we think before we speak, and make sure our words are about healing existing wounds and not opening up old ones, or even worse, creating new ones. Our residents and families deserve our best efforts, and verbal communication is key to all else we do. By the way, this works remarkably well with your co-workers, family, and friends... so take it home with you!

In closing, remember this: from operations, to programs, to mental health, to education, the true wealth of the Merrimac Center lies in its human resources of talented, dedicated professionals. It is because of this singular purpose, this positive communal attitude that we have been able to successfully carry out our mission year in and year out. My thanks to everyone that has contributed. My admiration of your efforts is genuine. I am proud to be your leader and hope to serve you, as you serve the troubled youth under our care.

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to each of you and your families.....God Bless!

*Mike Sawyer*



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

*Eric Finley*

*Maurice Harrell*

*Sara McClain*

*Kevin Newton*

*Benjamin Pope*

*Tiffany Rountree*

*Deltress Searcy*

NEW ADDITIONS

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

On October 3rd the Merrimac Center hosted a tour for fifteen members of the Williamsburg League of Women Voters as part of their interest in the Virginia Justice System. The League of Women Voters was founded in 1920 just six months before women won the right to vote. What began as an effort to help 20 million women carry out their new responsibilities as voters has evolved into a politically active nationwide organization. Today they encourage informed and active participation in government at all levels through voter services and advocacy activities on issues they have studied. The League is non-partisan, but is always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public. Following a brief discussion session with Mr. Sawyer, Ms. Cludinski, Mrs. Mingee, Ms. Jones, and Mr. Whalen, the group toured the facility. It was a wonderful opportunity to share our mission with people in our community.

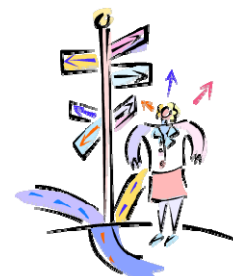


## CBT ANNUAL REFRESHER

October was the month for our annual Cognitive Behavioral Training (CBT) refresher for staff. Once a year we review our behavior management program by taking a closer look at its components, which help our residents change the way they think, ultimately changing their behaviors and their consequences. This year the team competition was in full swing.

Each of our 4 teams, including the day and evening shift staff, and our “Teacher” team competed in a 6-round question and answer competition in the areas of “The CBT Model,” “Rational vs. Irrational Thoughts,” “The Rational Self Analysis Worksheet,” “Positive Reinforcement,” “Time-Outs,” and “Strategic Program Modifications.” All the topics encompass the techniques we use to help our residents function more successfully in the detention center, and more importantly, when they return to their home communities. While always maintaining safety and security, our hope is to prevent or reduce the likelihood of our youth returning to detention by reducing their criminogenic thinking.

Although the competitive nature of our staff could never have been anticipated, we were glad we could incorporate training with teambuilding and having fun! In case you're wondering, team “Teachers” was the big winner this year! We are currently planning to make it an annual competition... Go Team Merrimac!



Congratulations and thanks to the following Merrimac employees and teachers who reached milestones of service in 2013

**5 YEARS**

- Wendy Bailey
- Beverly Harris
- Calvin Hurd
- LaShawn Kelly
- Louis Richardson
- Krystal Stanley

**10 YEARS**

- Thomas Moore
- Michael Polite



**POST-D HELPS ERASE THE NEED**

The Post-D residents are now doing community service work for an organization called “Erase the Need”. Erase the Need is an outreach center for students of economically disadvantaged families that provides school supplies, food, personal hygiene items, children’s books, clothing, and assistance to homeless students. The Center is a partnership between WJCC and the Williamsburg Sentara Regional Medical Center, and also has a collaborative contract agreement with the Foodbank of the Virginia Peninsula. The center participates in the “Weekend Backpack” program that provides food to children on the weekends who otherwise would likely have none, and maintains the “Stop and Read” program that supplies children with books at local businesses to take home in an effort to foster a love of reading and learning. Every Monday after lunch our Post-D residents load into a van and drive to the old maintenance building that was graciously donated to Erase the Need by Sentara. Residents work cooperatively to complete a multitude of tasks including organizing donations, stocking shelves, pulling stock, filling orders, and cleaning. Residents and staff have been participating for over a month now and seem to really enjoy the opportunity to give back to the community and those in need.



**Holiday Appreciation**

Merrimac Center staff will be honored this year according to our usual tradition of gathering for a holiday meal. This year’s celebration will be held the week of December 9th.

**WELCOME ABOARD**

This fall a new teacher joined our team. A big welcome to Mr. Peter Schweitzer, a graduate of UVA who has worked in the Williamsburg James City County school system for over 19 years. He and his wife Kristin reside in Williamsburg with their two children. Over the years he has taught German, Math and Instructional Technology. He was hired to fill the position of our previous Math teacher, Mrs. Potter, who retired this fall after thirty years of service to WJCC Schools.





## LEAPING LIZARDS!



**Slim-Jim & Grogina**

“Slim-Jim and Grogina are in their own 125 gallon tank with several obstacles for fun. They are about ten years old.”

Four lizards have taken up residence in the science classroom at the Merrimac Center this year. Mrs. Vaughan and her students now maintain habitats for two Bearded Dragons and two Geckos.

Students cast votes to decide on their names. They take turns feeding them and cleaning their living space. These quotes are from residents who were asked to provide some information about our lizards for the newsletter.



**King & Diamond**

“The coolest residents of Merrimac are King and Diamond. They are beautiful leopard Geckos.”

“Did you know that Geckos are nocturnal? The heat lamp and black light provide the comfort of desert life.”

“Geckos eat five to six meal worms or crickets each day. Their tails are fat because the fat from the food they eat is stored in their tail.”

“On average the Bearded Dragons eat five crickets and four meal worms and always have fresh greens and pellets in their tank.”

## From the kitchen...

Get creative with your cookies this holiday season. Use one cookie cutter to make two different creations. Right-side up gives you a gingerbread man and upside-down gives you a reindeer!

- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 3/4 C Molasses           | 1 t Baking Soda       |
| 1/3 C Packed Brown Sugar | 1/2 t Ground Allspice |
| 1/3 C Water              | 1/2 t Ground Cloves   |
| 1/8 C Butter, softened   | 1 t Ground Ginger     |
| 3 1/4 C Flour            | 1/2 t Ground Cinnamon |

Mix molasses, brown sugar, water & butter until smooth. Combine flour, baking soda and spices. Stir into wet mixture. Cover dough and chill 3 hours. Preheat oven to 350°. Roll dough to 1/4" thick and cut into desired shapes. Bake 1" apart for 8 to 10 minutes. Decorate when completely cool.



## Mental Health Corner

This year our Mental Health Team began not only recognizing national awareness months, but we decided to take it one step further. We are using hands-on projects and contests to foster month-long conversations regarding difficult subjects and help provide real life coping skills that partner with our CBT program. As a result, our residents are being encouraged to take responsibility for their actions, make rational choices, and take charge of their future. We have celebrated topics that raise self-awareness, and we have acknowledged very specific areas of serious concern that face our residents.

In August we created “Mental Health Corner”. We chose a wall visible to all who enter the secure part of our facility, each month changing it to reflect the designated topic. Using facts, statistics, and projects completed by our residents, we have focused on the following :

August: Substance Abuse Awareness & “Happiness Happens”

September: Self-Improvement & Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery

October: Domestic Violence Awareness & National Bullying Prevention

November: Addiction Awareness & Runaway Prevention

December: National Stress-Free Family Holidays & National Drunk Driving Awareness



In October we held a contest to see who could create the best anti-bullying poster. This is the first prize winner!



Best wishes for a joyous



holiday season and a

prosperous New Year from all of us at Merrimac!