

January 2012

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SAVE THE DATE
2012 Adolescent Conference



April 23-25, 2012
Orlando, Florida

The FJJA Newsletter is published monthly
 Cathy Craig-Myers, *Editor*
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Deadline is the 4th of each month
 Send your news to lynn@fjja.org

FJJA, DJJ, and FI Network Join Together to Celebrate Youth Success

This month, agencies across the state serving juvenile justice involved youth will join together to celebrate Juvenile Justice Youth Success Day as part of annual Children's Week in Tallahassee. The Florida Juvenile Justice Association in partnership with the Florida Network encourage your participation in events to include:

Monday, January 30, Youth Success Art

Reception and Silent Auction - Join DJJ, the Florida Juvenile Justice Foundation, Twin Oaks, & DISC Village in celebrating the success of DJJ youth.
 Time 6 - 8 pm
 Location Gallery for Innovation of the Arts
 R.A. Gray Building
 500 S. Bronough St, Tallahassee

Tuesday, January 31 - Youth Success Day

Press Conference - Join DJJ Secretary Wansley Walters, Lt. Governor Jennifer Carroll, FJJA Executive Director Cathy Craig-Myers, FL Network CEO Stacy Gromatski, and House and Senate Members.
 Time 9:30 am
 Location Capital Courtyard, Tallahassee

Tuesday, January 31 - FJJA Legislative Awards

- Join FJJA member presentations to Legislators who have supported improvement in Florida's juvenile justice system.
 Time Individual presentations TBA
 Location Legislative offices, Tallahassee

Tuesday, January 31 - Florida Juvenile Justice

Association and FI Network Reception - Join as we celebrate Youth Success – FJJA and FL Network, House /Senate Members and DJJ leadership (*by invitation only*)
 Time 5:30 - 7:30 pm
 Location The Governor's Club, Tallahassee



FJJA Congratulates DJJ Youth Ambassadors

DJJ has announced two of the four youth who have been chosen to serve as DJJ Youth Ambassadors.

- **Rebecca Dugger**, a graduate of PACE. She is 22 and currently a student at Florida State University.
- **Claricia Williams**, who will graduate next month from G4S Okeechobee Girls Academy. She is 18 years old.

We will share the stories of all DJJ Youth Ambassadors in our February Newsletter. Congratulations!

Legislative News

General Revenue Estimates Show Little Change

Updated general estimates have confirmed that projected revenue will grow only slightly, about \$46 million higher than expected, and also predicted that revenue will not meet projection estimates next year by about \$20 million.

Florida's recovery continues to grow at a slow pace and there will be a shortfall of \$1.4 billion for FY 12-13. Legislators plan to use \$1.4 billion shortfall as the gap between projected tax revenues and the rising costs of services and programs. Increased costs include projected Medicaid growth of \$900 million and 31,500 students to be added to the public school rolls.

Session Starts: Senate In No Hurry to Craft Budget Hoping for Better Estimates Later

The House has already released their budget allocations, a clear message to the Senate that they plan to proceed with crafting the state budget. The House budget includes a \$1 billion increase in education funding, \$100 million for tax cuts and a plan for \$1 billion for reserves. The Senate has announced it will delay the release of its initial budget proposal.

The Senate is still leaving the door open to end session earlier and come back when they have a more definitive picture on the state of Florida's revenue. Senate leadership had circulated a letter supporting Senate President Haridopolos suggestion to end regular session in early February and come back in the spring hoping for revenue to improve. Although the next scheduled update to state revenue forecasts is after session ends, but Amy Baker announced that the EDR could meet earlier if that was the desire of the legislature.

FJJA LEGISLATIVE MATERIALS NOW AVAILABLE ONLINE

The FJJA 2012 Legislative Agenda Brochure and 2012 FJJA Briefing on the Continuum is now available.

For FJJA Legislative Agenda Brochure, [click here](#)

For FJJA Briefing on the Continuum, [click here](#)

FJJA 2012 Legislative Agenda

No Funding Cuts to Juvenile Justice.

Over the last 3 years, DJJ reductions have amounted to close to \$167 million dollars. Last year, the agency took a cut of more than \$70 million dollars. As DJJ works to improve the system of care, maintaining current levels of funding will ensure further success in the reduction of crime and other related costs, and second, prevent the flow of youth into adult corrections, reducing the need for future prison construction by taxpayer dollars.

FJJA Recommends:

Taking into consideration the significant budget cut to DJJ last year, FJJA recommends that DJJ be spared further reductions in upcoming session.

Increase Investment in Community Based Services.

Investments should focus on the following program areas: 1) prevention, early intervention and diversion; 2) specialized residential; 3) transition, reentry and aftercare; and 4) education, career education and industry certification.

FJJA Recommends:

If the revenue picture improves – investing additional dollars in community based services and contracted rates will further enhance youth success, lower recidivism rates, provide maximum return on taxpayer investment and sustain proven programs.

TaxWatch Releases Newest Florida Public Opinion Poll on Criminal Justice and Juvenile Justice

According to a report released by the Florida TaxWatch Center for Smart Justice and Associated Industries of Florida, in consultation with Right on Crime, a majority of Florida Republican voters support significant criminal and juvenile justice reforms.

Poll data indicated that 84% support major changes in the system that can send fewer non-violent offenders to prison and instead look to more cost-effective alternatives, and that 81% support evidence-driven, community based alternatives to juvenile prisons.

To read report, [click here](#).

Rally for Christian Fernandez

As many of you know, Christian was charged at the age of twelve in the death of his brother. If convicted at his trial scheduled to begin on February 27th, he will be the youngest person in America sentenced to life without parole.

On Feb 8th, Melissa Higgins and Jon Perri of Change.org are hosting a rally for Christian Fernandez in front of the Duval County Courthouse. They are seeking as many volunteers as possible to participate in this event. This takes place at 7am.

Please contact Melissa for more details at 322melissa@gmail.com.

Impacts of Federal Budget Cuts on Services to At-Risk Delinquent Youth are Significant

Department of Labor Grants	2009	2012
Job Corps	\$1.7 b	\$1.7 b
Youth Build	\$70 m	\$80 m
Young Ex-Offenders	N/A	\$20 m
Second Chance Act	\$88.5 m	\$80.3 m
Youth Training (WIA)	\$924 m	\$826 m
Department of Education Grants		
Incarcerated Youth (State Grants)	\$17.2 m	N/A
OJJDP Grants		
Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grants	\$546 m	\$470 m
Byrne Discretionary and Competitive Grants	\$208.5 m	\$15 m
Second Chance Act	\$40 m	\$63 m
Drug Courts (including family drug courts)	\$40 m	\$35 m
Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention	\$374 m	\$262.5 m
Challenge Grants (Demonstration Projects)	\$82 m	X
Formula Grants	\$75 m	\$40 m
Incentive/Delinquency Prevention Grants	\$62 m	\$20 m
Tribal Youth	\$25 m	\$10 m
Gang Prevention	\$10 m	\$5 m
Alcohol Prevention	\$25 m	\$5 m
Juvenile Accountability Block Grants	\$55 m	\$30 m
Community-Based Violence Prevention	N/A	\$8 m
Mentoring	\$80 m	\$78 m
Victims of Child Abuse	\$20 m	\$18 m
Missing Children/Child Exploitation	\$137 m	\$65 m
Violence Against Women Act	\$415 m	\$412.5 m
Court Appointed Special Advocates	\$15 m	\$4.5 m

In Remembrance

Grace Marie Dimm, the Executive Director of PACE Center for Girls Pasco, passed away on Tuesday, January 10, 2012 at her home in Indian Rocks. The entire PACE family and the extended Pasco community are deeply saddened by this loss.

PACE Center for Girls was an important part of Grace's life, and in a short time, she built a lasting legacy. Grace was a passionate voice for girls and believed that they deserved a warm, inviting place to help them turn their lives around and achieve their full potential.

To accomplish this, Grace and her Board of Directors pulled together the entire Pasco community and worked diligently on the renovation of a new facility to meet the needs of the community's girls. Grace wanted the new Center to be open, peaceful and professional and to instill in girls the idea that college and the professional working world were a part of their futures. In September 2011, Grace fulfilled that dream and opened the new PACE Center for Girls of Pasco County. The new Center resembled a modern, community college with large, bright classrooms, a library, a computer lab and a light filled atrium. The new Center has been transformative for the girls, staff and the entire Pasco community.



With Grace's passing, Florida has lost an ardent advocate and a champion for the voice of girls. Grace served as a civic leader, a visionary, and a mentor to her staff. Most importantly, she cared deeply and passionately about the needs and rights of girls and she engaged everyone around her in this work. She will be deeply missed in so many ways and by so many people.

Grace's family has established a memorial fund in her honor so that her work on behalf of girls will continue. Anyone wishing to acknowledge Grace's dedication to girls may do so through a memorial fund established at PACE in her honor.

PACE Center for Girls
Grace Dimm Memorial Gifts
One West Adams Street, Suite 301
Jacksonville, FL 32202

In the News

SoCalPublic Radio: [*California counties to pay state \\$125,000 to house juvenile offenders*](#)

Oregonlive.com: [*Oregon will stop holding juvenile offenders in adult prison*](#)

Chicago Tribune: [*New goal for juvenile center; clear it out*](#)

Tampa Tribune: [*DJJ Selects teacher at Riverside Academy juvenile justice teacher of the year*](#)

New York Times: [*Some Good News from California's Justice System*](#)

Topeka Capital Journal: [*Kansas juvenile inmates lack vocational training*](#)

Of Interest

Vera Institute: Families as Partners: *Supporting Incarcerated Youth in Ohio*

To read report, [click here](#).

Research findings that incarcerated young people who maintain positive relationships with loved ones are more likely to address treatment needs while in juvenile justice placement facilities and refrain from additional justice system involvement after they return to the community.

U.S. Housing & Urban Development: *Co-action of Neighborhood & Individual Effects on Juvenile Recidivism*

To read report, [click here](#).

Studies of recidivism among juvenile offenders, on the other hand, have rarely taken neighborhood influences into account. This study applied geographic analysis to the analysis of adjudicated juvenile delinquents assigned to court-ordered programs by the Family Court of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. It examined the simultaneous effects of neighborhood and individual (including family) characteristics on juvenile recidivism using local spatial clustering of probabilities of reoffending.

U.S. Department of Justice: *Bullying in Schools- An Overview*

To read report, [click here](#).

This bulletin examines the connection between different types and frequencies of bullying, truancy, and student achievement, and whether students' engagement in school mediates these factors.

OJJDP: *Juvenile Arrests for Violent Crime at Lowest Level in 20 Years*

To read report, [click here](#).

OJJDP has released *Juvenile Arrests 2009*, a bulletin analyzing data from the FBI's annual Crime in the United States report to characterize the extent and nature of juvenile crime. According to the 2009 data, U.S. law enforcement agencies made an estimated 1.9 million arrests of persons younger than 18 years old, nine percent fewer than in 2008. Between 2008 and 2009, there were declines in nearly every offense category. The number of juvenile arrests for Violent Crime Index offenses--murder, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault--decreased ten percent from 2008, reaching its lowest level since the early 1990s. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention developed this bulletin in partnership with the National Center for Juvenile Justice and the FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services Division and with the support of the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Children's Defense Fund: *The State of America's Children 2011*

To read report, [click here](#).

Report is a compilation of most recent and reliable national and state by state data on poverty, health, child welfare, juvenile justice, gun violence, early childhood development, education, hunger and nutrition.



Celebrating Youth Success!

Upcoming Conferences, Workshops, & Events

2 Day ARISE Life Skills Training, 9:00 am to 4:30 pm, February 13-14, 2012, Seacoast National Bank 3001 PGA Blvd., Palm Beach Gardens. To register or for more information contact Yasmin Isaacs at 561-630-2021.

NOTE: There is no cost to the ARISE 2 day Life Skills Training through March 31, 2012. After that time, facilities will have to pay for the training.

33rd Annual Training Institute on Behavioral Health and Addictive Disorders, February 13-16, 2012 Clearwater Beach, [click here](#) for registration and more information or call 800-441-5569

National Conference on Bullying, February 15-17, Orlando, [click here](#) for registration and other information.

National At-Risk Education Network National Conference, February 21-23, Panama City, [click here](#) for registration and information.

25th Annual Children's Mental Health Research and Policy Conference, March 4-7, Tampa, [click here](#) for registration and information.

Online Training

ARISE Two Day Life Skills Group Facilitator Training, previously delivered by senior ARISE Trainers in traditional class room settings, is now available online. This training is a comprehensive, self-guided 20 hour program designed to be taken at anytime from anywhere. Each Online lesson includes video clips of the classroom training which will provide a real opportunity to see how ARISE makes the lessons fun, interactive and effective. For information contact ARISE at 1-888-680-6100, or e-mail answers@at-riskyouth.org or go to www.at-riskyouth.org

NOTE: This is available free of charge (until March 30, 2012) to organizations working with DJJ youth. After that because of funding cuts facilities will have to pay for the training.

Upcoming Webinars

ARISE 60 Minute Webinars

Jan 25- *Making the Work Environment More Positive*

Feb 22- *Acting with Hope and Optimism*

To register or for more information contact ARISE at 1-888-680-6100, or e-mail answers@at-riskyouth.org or go to www.at-riskyouth.org



Important Dates to Remember

January 2012

- Jan 29 - Feb 3 - Children's Week
- Jan 30 - **FJJA Board Meeting**
DISC Village, Tallahassee
- Jan 31 - DJJ "Youth Success Day"
- Jan 31 - "FJJA Day at the Capital"
- Jan 31 - FJJA-FI Network Evening Reception

March 2012

- Mar 1, 2012 - **FJJA Board Meeting**
DISC Village, Tallahassee
- Mar 9 - Legislative Session ends

April 2012

- April 23-24, 2012 - Adolescent Conference, *Unsung Heroes: Making A Difference*, The Florida Hotel, Orlando.
- April 25, 2012 - Post Conference Workshop, The Florida Hotel, Orlando
- April 23, 2012 - 1/2 Day **FJJA Board Meeting** The Florida Hotel, Orlando.

May 2012

- **Executive Committee Visioning Session**, Orlando. Time/Location TBA

June 2012

- **FJJA Annual Retreat**, June 10-13, 2012, LaPlaya Resort, Naples

Member News

Gulf Coast Youth Win Essay Contest and Five Laptops

The youth of the High School High Tech (HSH) program of the Gulf Coast Youth Services (GCYS) programs recently participated in an essay contest, co-sponsored by the Able Trust and the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST).



The essay topic was, "Describe Your Education/Career Goals and How a Laptop will Help You Achieve Your Goals." There were 20 laptops awarded throughout the state of Florida and five laptops were awarded to Gulf Coast Youth programs, including Gulf Coast Youth Academy and Okaloosa Youth Academy.

Excerpts from the essays include, "...I believe receiving a laptop will help me on research to improve and learn," and "...to become an engineer...a laptop will help me with graphing." These young men are an example of what our youth are capable of and are worthy of many congratulations

DJJ Office Of Prevention Develops Partnership to Combat Bullying

The DJJ Office of Prevention recently partnered with the Beta Beta Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc. and Continental Societies, Inc., to provide a much needed presentation to elementary school students in the Miami/Dade County area on bullying. DJJ staffer Marie Boswell spoke to parents and children at Fairway elementary School in Miramar, Fl. The discussion topics included: what is bullying?, types of bullying, where it takes place, how to deal with bullying, how to get help, what role parents and guardians play and how to support your child.

Sequel Youth Hear Inspiring Speakers

Sequel Youth recently had the opportunity to meet and hear two motivating guest speakers; Mr. Samson Jackson, a 21 year old Sports Management college student, and Mr. CJ Spiller, who is a running back for the National Football League's Buffalo Bills.



Samson spoke eloquently to our youth about the importance of finding a way to deal with adversity and the benefits to surrounding yourself with positive people. He talked about the loss of his father at an early age as well as not being able to continue playing basketball due to a spinal injury. He discussed how those traumatic events motivated him instead of discouraged him.

Samson also stressed the importance of his own academic plan because he believes his plan will help him to meet his long term goals. He challenged the youth to find what he calls "Accountability Partners". He explained to the youth that an "Accountability Partners" is someone in your life that can influence your decision making. He also shared with the youth that he considers C.J. Spiller one of his "Accountability Partners".

He then introduced C.J. Spiller who spoke with the youth. He too, stressed the importance of adversity, academics, athletics and character. C.J. shared with the youth how he learned at an early age that being a good football player was not going to get him through life. He talked about how his grandmother raised him to be a man of character and when associating with people, he looks for character in people similar to the character his "Accountability Partners" possess.

C.J. shared with the youth that he learned the importance of education after he wasn't allowed to play football in the 7th grade because of his grades. He also could have made the decision to become a pro football player after his junior year of college, but instead chose to stay and earn his Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. C.J is now working on his Master's Degree.

Afterwards, Samson and C.J. had lunch with the youth and spent time speaking with the youth individually.



Celebrating Youth Success!

There is No Stopping William Now

Submitted by Karon Montgomery, Social Skills Coordinator/Restorative Justice Counselor

When you picture family, the image of a loving mother and father comes to mind along with a couple of siblings living the American dream. That was not the case for William Prince. William was removed from his mother at a very young age, not knowing his biological father; William bounced around the foster care system. Not having the proper guidance and discipline that most children receive from their parents, William strayed down the wrong path. Upon entering Columbus Juvenile Residential Facility (CJRF), William struggled to find his identity. Like a miracle the light bulb turned on, William began to work hard with his treatment goals and he eventually started to progress within the program.

Once he reached the transition phase of the program, William was able to participate in community service projects outside of the facility. Through the Restorative Justice program, William learned to give back to the community and restore some of the harm he had done in his past life. William participated in several projects such as recycling at Lowry Park Zoo, Love First Christian Center Homeless Outreach, T.R.E.E planting and Berns Park Restoration with Keep Hillsborough County Beautiful. Through these Restorative Justice Projects, William learned to appreciate the earth and to be wise about disposing of waste. William also learned the proper way of recycling and the positive impact it has on saving the earth. William, along with several other peers, participated in a plant restoration project for Berns Park. Due to the heavy extent of vandalism at the park over 40 trees and 100 plants needed to be restored.

After being successfully discharged from Columbus JRF, William was accepted to Florida Youth Challenge Academy (FLYCA) in Stark, FL. FLYCA is a 17 1/2 month voluntary program geared toward Florida's 16 to 18 year old at-risk youth. The program consists of a 5 1/2 month residential phase and a 12 month post-residential phase. The residential phase of the program takes place in a highly disciplined and motivational environment promoting structure and academics along with leadership, health, community service, life skills, job skills, physical fitness and citizenship. The post-residential phase takes place after graduation from the residential phase and is a time when the cadet uses the skills learned in the residential phase through their placement in either a job, further education, or the military. The cadet is matched with a mentor during the residential phase and this mentor helps to guide the cadet during the 12 month post-residential phase.

William graduated at the top of his class and achieved many accolades such as Leadership Awards, Best Overall Appearance Award, Outstanding Fitness Award and Outstanding Academic Achievement Award. William also obtained his high school diploma while in FLYCA. When William was committed to Columbus JRF, he participated in the Culinary Arts program where he found his love for cooking and was able to achieve a Florida Ready-to-Work certificate. Currently William is attending Hillsborough Community College where he is studying Culinary Arts and with the Florida Ready-to-Work certificate he received while at Columbus JRF, he is now working a full-time job and living independently.

*It Takes A Village!
Dedicated and
caring counselors,
mentors, therapists
& teachers work to
help DJJ youth
reach their true
potential.*



Celebrating Youth Success!

Andre's Second Chance

Andres entered Eckerd's juvenile justice aftercare program in Miami-Dade County in March of 2011 and continued with Eckerd until September. Just as Andres was starting the program, he witnessed a shooting resulting in the death of his best friend. Despite experiencing this traumatic and devastating personal loss, he managed to push forward and followed through with his aftercare requirements.

With the support of his Eckerd counselor, therapist and family, Andres received his high school diploma in August and shortly thereafter successfully completed the requirements of his supervision. Andres is now employed full-time and pursuing possible enlistment in the military. He is interested in sharing his story and experiences with others and plans to maintain contact with Eckerd. He appreciates all that Eckerd has done to help him get his life on track – and is thankful for the second chance that was given to him.

For Marcos, Treatment, Aftercare and Mentoring Made a Difference

Marcos was 16 years old when he was successfully released from Dade Juvenile Residential Facility. With a strong history of criminal behavior and substance abuse, he made a vow not to return to the same way of life upon release. Once released, he immediately began looking for a job to help his mother financially, as well as beginning his aftercare under the supervision of Eckerd Youth Alternatives. The Dade program participates with a mentoring partnership with a local non-profit, called the B.E.S.T. Academy and a local ministry from the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ of the Apostolic Faith. Mentors assisted Marcos with job applications and prep for his job interviews. His mentor took him job hunting and on the third interview he was hired by Pollo Tropical, a national restaurant chain. Because his residency papers were not in order, he was unable to start right away. This did not deter Marcos in any way, and together with the assistance of his mentor, he completed the paperwork at Immigration Naturalization Services and patiently waited for his residency. It took five months and during that time Marcos did not sit idly by. He returned to Doral Senior High School as a tenth grader and went out for the basketball team. He made the team and has managed to maintain a B average while keeping up with a packed schedule which includes daily practice and night games. It is not uncommon for him to get home at 9 pm on school nights.

Since joining the mentoring program, Marcos decided to become a Junior Mentor for B.E.S.T. Academy. He has given many hours of service by keeping in touch with and encouraging other youths released from DJRF. He models the hard work and behaviors needed to reach personal goals. His inspiring story has touched other youths and shown them that they too can set goals and achieve them. It is very evident that other youth in the program look up to him and are able to see firsthand that someone like themselves can meet the challenge.

Marcos currently remains enrolled at Doral Academy where he balances his responsibilities as a student athlete and now part time employee for the Burger King Corporation. He continues to serve as a Junior Mentor with the B.E.S.T. Academy, and successfully completed all the mandated requirements of his aftercare and thus was released from supervision. He is now an active member in the aforementioned church, a productive member in his local community, and sets an example of dedication, discipline and staying focused on reaching your potential.



Celebrating Youth Success!

Hi-Five Program Provided Zy the Support He Needed to Stay Out of Trouble

Zy was living with his grandmother while his mother was serving in the United States Army overseas. He was a constant disruption in class and often had to be separated from the rest of the class, and was a permanent fixture in the principal's office. It seemed like he was always receiving a disciplinary referral for something. Zy was a bright child, but that he could not control himself and was failing as a result of his behavior.

Zy was then invited to join Eckerd's Super Kid Club where he received small group instruction as part of Eckerd's school-based prevention service called "Hi-Five". The Hi-Five curriculum features character education, substance abuse and violence prevention, and community service. Zy's mother returned from the Middle East shortly after he joined Eckerd's Super Kid Club, and he was told that his family might eventually move to Texas. As a result, Zy's behavior started once again to decline. Zy joined the gardening club started by his Eckerd counselor creating the opportunity to work with him both in and out of the classroom. His behavior began improve for the duration of the school year. Although he still received a few disciplinary referrals, it was a marked improvement.

The next school year, Zy participated in both the Super Kids Club and Gardening Club; his grades and behavior greatly improved, and soon he was seated with the rest of the class with disciplinary referrals declining. Starting his 6th grade year, Zy was actually welcomed into the classroom by his teachers and his behavior had improved so much that that teachers actually wanted him in their classes. And during the first grading period of that year, Zy even made the A/B honor roll! Zy still lives with his mother in a high poverty, high crime neighborhood, but he spends time working on his grades and pursuing his dream of a college education rather than getting into trouble in his neighborhood.

*Success is how
high you bounce
when you hit
bottom.*

~ George S. Patton

Marco's Story, as told by his aftercare counselor

Marco entered Eckerd's juvenile justice aftercare program in Palm Beach County. Marco's mother recently told me that she is convinced that Eckerd has helped him turn his life around. As his Eckerd counselor, I have learned Marco does not open up to just anyone – and he certainly did not want to listen to me or his past juvenile probation officer.

Prior to Marco being committed to DJJ, he was on a downward spiral with several serious felony charges and violations of probation. Marco was committed to a High Risk Juvenile Commitment Program.

As Marco's counselor, I've tried to show him I have a genuine concern for him and his future. His Mother acknowledges that Marco really doesn't have positive male role models in his life, and as his counselor, I'm able to give him insightful guidance and encouragement. Marco rarely opens up to adults, but I've been able to gain his respect and trust.

Presently, Marco attends high school and is scheduled to graduate next month. He also works part-time at Denny's and aspires to attend college after he graduates high school. At a recent Eckerd legislative learning session, Marco spoke very articulately about his successes and how Eckerd aftercare services have made a difference in his life, and he was recently nominated to participate in Florida's First Youth Town Hall Committee.

Marco has also expressed interest in joining the local Juvenile Advisory Group to share feedback regarding the juvenile justice system from a youth's perspective. Marco now exudes a drive to succeed and, thanks to the help he's received from Eckerd, his mother has renewed confidence that he will indeed lead a successful life.



Celebrating Youth Success!

Kimberly's Success story: In her own words

Before I came to Okeechobee Girls Academy I was a complete mess. Now after being here for about 7 months I have become a changed person. When I was free, I was a menace to society. I ran around doing whatever I wanted, I had no respect for adults and people who were in charge of me, and I didn't care about anything let alone my own safety. I was angry at the whole world for all of my problems and I took my anger out on everyone that I came in contact with. I've realized that the way I approached things before wasn't the right way. Now I know how to control my anger and handle my personal situations in a much better manner.

If I wanted to do something I was going to do it and no one was going to stop me. That was my old mentality. I did what I wanted, when I wanted to do it, and how I wanted to do it. Forget my parents and the police; I could care less what they said. Coming to O.G.A. has made me realize that I can't do what I want to do all the time and that the people who were making the rules were only making them so I could be a more successful person and a better citizen.

I'm here because I have two counts of battery on law enforcement officers. This pretty much tells you that I had little to no respect for my elders. Even though my parents taught me right, I just felt like I didn't have to listen to anyone and I was the boss of everything. However, since I've been here, my respect for my parents and authority figures has grown. Even if I don't like what they are saying I still listen. The staff here really has instilled that in me.

I was mad about a lot of things; some things were my fault and some things I couldn't do anything about. The fact that I couldn't change some of my situations just made me even angrier and that caused me to lash out at everyone. If you made me mad you were going to get it. The therapists here have taught me better ways to let out my anger and express my feelings without being violent and coming off the wrong way. I write in my journal instead of cussing people out. I take deep breaths instead of yelling and screaming at the top of my lungs. These were better ways to get a grip on my anger.

By using the techniques I have learned here while at O.G.A., I feel like I'll be more successful at home. They have taught me that there are better ways of handling things than the ways I handled them in the past. I am truly glad I came here because my skills have greatly improved. Thanks to O.G.A. I can go back into my community as better person than I was before.

Rachel's Second Chance

Rachel has expressed great appreciation for Eckerd's juvenile justice aftercare program in Palm Beach County, saying that it has "helped her change her life and grow up". Eckerd's counselor supported Rachel by encouraging her to make the right choices, and because of the services and support provided to her by Eckerd, she completed all of her court sanctions and is receiving her high school diploma.

Because of the relationship Rachel formed with Eckerd staff and counselors, she felt secure and that someone genuinely cared about her – something she has longed to have for quite some time. Rachel is currently employed at Everest University in Fort Lauderdale and is seeking to enroll and major in Criminal Justice at the University. Rachel is also seeking enrollment at Palm Beach State College as a Pharmacy Technician. Rachel reports that she would like to continue to have a relationship with Eckerd in the future and would like to even become a guest speaker to share her experiences and to inspire other youth in the community.



Celebrating Youth Success!

Fatima Has Big Plans for the Future: In her own words

My parents worked long hours, and I hardly had any supervision at home. I found it easy to skip school and hang out with friends. I would take the bus to school, but never actually go to class. Skipping a couple classes turned into skipping a few days, and eventually I missed an entire semester of school. I was dating older boys, experimenting with drugs and had F's and D's for grades. My friend, who attended PACE, told me about the program and how it could turn my life around. I was ready to finally make something of myself.

Now, I've been at PACE for a year and a half. Through PACE I have learned healthy ways to express myself. I am the Student Government Vice President and a mentor to the other girls. I like that PACE sees girls as individuals and focuses on our strengths. I plan to transition from PACE soon to finish high school. I want to attend Florida Gulf Coast University and become a juvenile probation officer. I thank PACE for helping me find the right path, and I'm going to help other teens do the same.

Good Choices and a Commitment to Change Equals Success

B. W. is a young lady who came to the DOVE Intensive Mental Health program with several factors working against her. Her mother and father divorced when she was young and she lived with her mother and grandmother. She has experienced many types of trauma including physical, sexual and emotional abuse. She lost a brother when he was shot. She also has a history of drug use with marijuana being the main addiction. She also has a history of anger issues, and the trauma and abuse have resulted in numerous battery charges filed by her family.

The day B. W. arrived it was apparent to us that she was a survivor. Despite all of the obstacles in her way she attained passing grades on her GED tests. Her dedicated hard work at the program allowed B.W. a second chance to pick up new skills and to reevaluate her life. She received daily counseling and learned new job skills; when she left the program she had created a plan on how she was going to live her life. Staff is proud that within a week of her release, B.W. found a job and has held it for the last 8 month. In addition, she was recently awarded "employee of the month."

B. W. success is a result of the good choices she made while in the program. She decided that instead of going back to the streets and running with the same crowd she choose to live in a more rural area where the pace is slower upon release. She chose a town where there is a community college that has automotive classes, one of her passions, and plans to enroll in the fall.

She lives on her own, in her own place and pays her own bills. She has taken pride of her accomplishments and is learning to be the best that she can be. She has joined a local church and is in counseling classes to continue to learn how to manage her anger. She knows she is not perfect, but she has a new life on her own terms and has been given the tools to be able to cope with challenges that come up every day, something she learned at Dove IMH and now applies to her everyday life.

It's never too late to be who you might have been.

~ George Elliot



Celebrating Youth Success!

Twin Oaks Vocational Academy Shows Youth No Dream is Impossible

T.S. was in our program from late 2010- late 2011. He entered our program with severe emotional and mental health issues. He was previously adopted and was told that he could not return to that home. While in our care this youth aged out of the 'foster care' system and had nowhere to go and did not qualify for independent living because of the aforementioned adoption. During his tenure with us he obtained disability funding, placement in an adult group home that provides therapeutic services and obtained successful employment.

J.C. was in our program during the 2011 year. He obtained numerous vocational OCP certifications and also his GED. He had never welded and had no knowledge of the industry. When he was successfully discharged from our program, we were able to help him get financial aid so that he could enroll in a vocational institution where he is currently thriving and living independently. He also reports weekly to his former treatment team to share his success and appreciation.

S.A. was in our program during the 2011 year. He entered our program with no experience in welding and needed his GED as well. He was able to get his GED and OCP certificates in welding. He got a great job in a new home town (parent relocated during his tenure here). He is currently employed at the same company where he was hired upon graduating our program. He was hired at a higher rate of pay due to his knowledge and certifications (welding) from our facility. He continues to thrive and 2 months ago contacted us thanking all who had helped him.

Q.H. was in our program from late 2010- 2011. He entered our program with substance abuse issues. While here, he focused on his education which placed him back on track to graduate. He returned to Pensacola, Florida to enroll in high school where he is now the starting forward for his H.S. basketball team. He is being actively recruited by several DIV I basketball programs (Alcorn St and South Florida) and his team is currently undefeated. He is maintaining his grades and successfully completed all of his probation. We recently heard from another youth Q.H. was at a gathering back home in Pensacola and a 'joint' was being passed around... when the 'joint' made it to Q.H. he took it; threw it on the ground; spit on it; stomped it out with his foot and walked off.

*Success is a
journey, not a
destination.*

~ Ralph Arbitelle

Megan is Moving Forward and Not Looking Back

Megan Carlson arrived at the Dove Academy October 1, 2010 and immediately began to excel in every aspect of the program. She made her mind up right away to obtain all of the credits needed to receive her high school diploma and did so with no problems.

She enrolled in the culinary arts program where she received her OCP A and B and obtained her Safe Food Handler certificate. Megan graduated successfully from the program July 20, 2011 with a high school diploma in hand and a new lease on life.

Upon returning home Megan enrolled at the local community college where she is a full time student and maintains a full time job. If that isn't enough, her spare time is occupied by volunteering at the local food bank giving back to the community.



Celebrating Youth Success!

How I have changed- Marlo Malika Jones's Story

I would like to tell you how my stay at Okeechobee Girls Academy has changed me. First it has made a big impact on my way of thinking. When I first arrived here I had a very rough start because I was not focused on me. I did not care about anything. I was used to being caught up in the "drama." I used to hang out with the wrong crowd.

I believed that this program would not help me, and I was wrong. O.G.A has helped me overall with everything. I still have room to improve, and I am not perfect, but I can easily say that my biggest success is how much I have matured. I am proud of myself for making such a big turnaround. I see things a lot differently compared to how I used to think about everything.

Here are things I have changed: knowing when to talk and knowing when not to talk. I feel secure about myself, so now I don't worry about what people say about me. I stay away from negativity and stay more to myself.

I am going home on January 14th. When I go home I cannot wait to take what I have learned here and bring it back to my community, and show the new positive and improved, me.

Martin Girls Academy - Youth Success Week

Abraham Lincoln said it best: "That some achieve great success, is proof to all that others can achieve it as well". This is true of two young ladies from Martin Girls Academy. KO entered MGA in August of last year. She was detoxing on drugs, had a history of risky sexual behaviors and was, for the most part, homeless before entering the system. Her relationship with her mother could be described as hostile and aggressive. During her stay at MGA, she overcame severe withdrawals, learned to express feelings that she had been suppressing and that led to her drug use and began working on building her self-esteem. She and her mother also re-built their relationship that started at MGA with arguing and both crying to a family day of bonding, hugging and encouragement of each other.

A similar story can be told of KB. She entered the program in December of last year, unable to express her feelings, untrusting, and unable to deal with the traumatic events in her past. She was self-harming on a daily basis in order to manage her emotions. It took her at least six months to open up to her therapist and begin to face the issues she had been suppressing. Soon after that, she learned better coping skills and has progressed through the last three months without an attempt at self-harming. She has recognized the feelings that drove her to self-harm and has been able to ask for help when she is struggling with her feelings. Recently, she made transition status and through the development of plans to go home, she demonstrated how much she had truly grown: not wanting to go back into the environment that encouraged her previous behaviors, she reached out to another program where she felt she would be most successful. KB has learned that asking for help is not a weakness and that being able to recognize when she needs help has empowered her to feel more in control of her life and her feelings.

Recently, the program was invited to speak at a community event. These two young ladies, who once displayed introverted behaviors and had low self-esteem, were able to get up before a crowd of lawyers, business owners, and other professionals and speak eloquently about their pasts, their path through the program and their future goals. At the end of their presentation, members of the group expressed how moved they were by the display of bravado shown by these young women. It was a moving experience for all involved and is inspiring for everyone that great success is achievable with dedication to self and willingness to change.

I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning to sail my ship.

~ Louisa May Alcott