



THE FAMILY CONNECTION

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT

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Editor's Corner

I recently had the opportunity to attend the International Prisoner's Family conference held in Dallas, Texas. I attended sessions that had speakers from New Zealand, France, and Wales. People from many countries and at least 10 of the other states in the United States were in attendance. Lock UP is a concern all over the world, and by coming together, we can be educated on what is working.

One of the sessions I attended was presented by a man that had been given a lifetime sentence in a Texas prison. Yet, today he is a free man and has a passion to use his talent to help young people avoid hard learned lessons.

He spoke of how difficult it was for him to keep his hope of ever making it out into the free world during his 20 years in prison. He also said that his family contacts through letters, phone calls and face to face visits were what kept his hope alive. He shared of the importance of communication with the outside world and letting those behind the fence know that there is someone waiting for them at home. He stated that often prisoners feel guilty for being a burden to their family and sometimes push their families away while they are locked up. But his message was to keep up the communication because regular family contact brings down their anxiety level about returning home.

This newsletter is the first of a series to come. Every 3 months a newsletter will be available to families of TJJD youth. It is our intention to provide families with tips on how to support their child and bring them news of what is happening in their child's facility. If you have questions that you would like answered please send them to me at Rebecca.Garza@tjjd.texas.gov or you may call me at 512-490-7662. If I get questions that several of you need addressed, I will consider having a "Frequently asked Questions" section in our newsletter.



Tell us how we are doing: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FY16Famsurvey_English

12th Annual Strengthening Youth and Families Conference

The Strengthening Youth and Families Conference will be held in Arlington, Texas this year on November 7th through November 10th, 2016. The Sheraton Arlington Hotel will be the site of the conference. The workshop sessions will focus on interests of families, volunteers and youth-serving professionals. This conference will be a great opportunity for families to meet subject matter experts and to meet some of the TJJD staff

from across the state. Don't miss this incredible event that promises to inspire, educate, and expand your professional contacts. In order to encourage family members to attend this conference, we have scholarships available. Scholarship applications are available after August 1st by contacting the family liaison at your child's facility or you may call Rebecca Garza, the Family Support Administrator for TJJD at 512-490-7662.

Evins Global Youth Day

On April 16, 2016, youth and their families enjoyed a wonderful day during Family Day at Evins while also participating in Global Youth Service Day. All youth were able to paint the birdhouses in their dorms and then they were able to put the final touch along side family members during Global Youth Service Day. Self-adhesive stickers of birds, butterflies and a variety of other pictures were given to each family and youth to decorate the birdhouses. The finished products will now go to the elderly in the community. The project was funded by the State Volunteer Resource Council and



the local Evins Volunteer Council. Fidel Garcia, Community Relations Coordinator, said, "without the help of the caseworkers and JCO's in the pod the project would not have been possible. This was team work at its best and as a result over 100 birdhouses will now bring a smile to the elderly."

Questions or Comments?

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Ron Jackson Family Day



Family appreciation was the theme for our Family Day on May 10th and 12th. The youth were very excited to see their family members and spend time with them. The families enjoyed

a nice summer lunch with special desserts made by our culinary arts class. To show appreciation each youth made a crown for their loved one and presented the crown to them while sharing words from their heart. Family Days are always a special time for the families to be able to interact positively together in a joyful environment. The families often take time off of work, and drive hours to be able to come and visit. It is very much appreciated.

MRTC Family Event

On April 14th MRTC hosted a family event "Hope springs eternal- steps to a new future" the families were allowed to eat lunch together – then began working on a Family project where each youth and their families uniquely designed and painted a stepping stone. The stepping stones will be planted on the Campus of MRTC and some adorn the walk way into the facility.

PAWS Program Underway at Gainesville State School

The PAWS program is underway at Gainesville State School. Four youth are now participating in the Pairing Achievement with Services

Program. These four young men are responsible for feeding, grooming and training their dogs. During this 12 week program, the young men will be training their dogs to earn the Canine Good

Citizen Certification. Once the canine becomes certified, they will be placed up for adoption. When asked how this program can benefit the youth, one youth responded, "It can benefit me in the future by

giving me the experience for a career in working with animals." He also said, "I am looking forward to the dog being my best friend." This

program requires the youth to be with the dogs for a large portion of the day, except when they are in school. The dogs will even sleep in a



kennel in the youth's room. Volunteer, Nancy Voss said, "I think it is a win-win situation for the youth and the dogs; unconditional love for both of them and it teaches the youth responsibility."

Giddings Hosts Family Day



Giddings State School welcomed families on May 7, 2016 for a Family Day. The weather was beautiful. Families enjoyed a meal, participated in games and enjoyed quality time together. The time that is

provided for families on these special days is crucial to the youth's success in their treatment.

Each boy was offered a flower to give to their mother or special loved one in honor of Mother's Day. There were numerous youth that were able to connect with family members that they have not seen for long period of time.

Some youth are fathers and one was able to see his daughter for the very first time. He looked her over many times, noticing that she had toes just like him! He will have an opportunity to participate in PAPA classes taught to youth that are fathers. These classes teach skills and inform the fathers of responsibilities they will have upon release.

Mart Celebrates Moms

On May 19th, 2016, MCSJCF received 60 visitors to celebrate the mothers of youth on campus at a Mother-Son Banquet. Families were able to enjoy a song written and sung by one of the youth and a presentation of the 7 habits to practice to raising strong children by the recreation staff. Then, while eating lunch, the mothers were encouraged to stay strong by a guest speaker discussing the importance of mothers in a child's life. The sons presented

a certificate of appreciation to their moms for being there for them through the good and bad times. The afternoon wrapped up with a few rounds of bingo and family photos that were taken free of charge.



Mart Has A Family Eggs-travaganza

On March 24, 2016, 63 visitors arrived at MCSJCF for a hopping good time. Families enjoyed time together playing games for prize tickets. They



participated in games like Egg relay, Egg bocce, Flush the Egg toss, Easter bunny bowling, Pin the tail on the bunny, and the Egg roll. Once they had their desired number of tickets, they went to the prize booth to trade them in for prizes. The most popular prizes were cards for 30 extra minutes added to a single visit or an extra free phone call from their case manager. In between games, they nibbled on some rabbit food of carrots and celery or showed off their moves on the dance floor. As always, family pictures were taken free of charge.

Changes Coming in the School Day

Beginning August 1, 2016, the TJJD Schools will implement a Flexible Block Schedule that will transform the way educational services and rehabilitation are provided to TJJD youth. Aligned to our core values, safety and innovation, the purpose for implementing the Flexible Block Schedule is to increase safety for students and staff, reduce class sizes, improve instruction for students, and increase rehabilitative specialized treatment.

Currently students have 26 hours of instructional time per week, excluding lunch and passing periods. On the Flexible Block schedule, students will have 22.5 hours of instructional time, excluding lunch and passing periods. Since ART, which is currently provided as a non-credit bearing class during the

school day, will be removed from the school schedule and offered on the dorm, the instructional time in content areas actually increases for students currently enrolled in ART.

The Flexible Block Schedule uses an alternating pattern which allows students to attend three 90-minute classes each day. If periods 1 - 3 occur on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, then periods 4 - 6 will occur on Tuesday and Thursday. The following Monday students will attend periods 4 - 6 and the pattern will continue throughout the school year.

Students that attend school in the morning (7:30 am - 11:40 am) will receive dorm-based activities such as treatment in the afternoon. Students that receive treatment in the morning

will attend school in the afternoon (1:15 pm - 5:25 pm). Benefits of the Flexible Block Schedule for the schools include:

- Smaller class sizes
- Differentiated instruction
- Improved classroom management
- Deeper PBIS implementation
- Increased opportunities for intramural activities

Benefits of the Flexible Block Schedule for the facilities include:

- Increased time for rehabilitative treatment
- Opportunities for intramural sports and activities
- Career exploration
- College readiness
- Life skills development

Voluntary Tattoo Removal Services

Our youth deserve every opportunity to be successful in the community after they leave our supervision and TJJD's Giddings State School is providing an added service to enhance their success for re-entry.

A free tattoo removal clinic was set up in January 2016 and about 20 youth are presently participating. To request tattoo removal services, a youth must ask his case manager to take his request to his Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT). Prioritization for tattoo removal is

given to tattoos that are visible in hands, arms, face, neck and whether the tattoos are gang affiliated. If the MDT approves the request, then youth and parent consents are obtained. Qualified and trained technicians are doing the tattoo removal services. A youth should expect it to take 3 to 6 sessions to remove a tattoo. Sessions are scheduled at 6

to 8 week intervals. Below are some before and after photos of tattoos that have been removed.



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