

ORLEANS JUVENILE JUSTICE TODAY



OPJC Newsletter Vol. 6

www.nola.gov/juvenile-court

A Message from the Chief Judge



The Importance of Community Engagement

Orleans Parish Juvenile Court (OPJC) is designing a strategic plan to implement more community engagement for the children and families of the Orleans community. Our goal is aimed at achieving a community outreach program that will focus on bringing awareness to our court practices and court programs. To this end, it is imperative that the community understand what we do, our purpose, and how services are provided to help our children.

OPJC understands challenges associated with community outreach; therefore, recognizes the importance of community

Our new initiative, “*Conversations with Juvenile Court*,” is a community outreach effort intended to engage the community in conversations about court processes and procedures. These conversations ensure community involvement and awareness regarding court alternative programs and other valuable resources available to families. This initiative is important for several reasons: First, feedback is gathered from families about their experiences when involved in court processes. Second, the same message is delivered across all courts. Third, families know that when they walk through the doors, a user friendly approach is used to assist with court system navigation. The overall goal is to connect with families, and to be more inclusive and visible in our community.

For more information about the new OPJC initiative, and to extend an invitation for us to present at your next meeting.

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CONTINUOUSLY GROWING

Sondra Mullen, Program Coordinator for Girls Reaching Out Works Wonders (GROWW) and program participants celebrated their first Annual Tea Celebration at the Ashe' Cultural Arts Center on Saturday, May 13, 2018. The event consisted of special performances featuring a dance group, a solo artist, and poetry recitation. According to Ms. Mullen, *"many of these girls have never experienced an event such as this Tea. I am honored to have graced them this opportunity at such a culturally centered community venue. This is an experience they would remember forever."*

Ms. Carol Bebell is the Co-founder and Executive Director of the Ashe' Cultural Arts Center, delivered a special message of love and support of the community. Ms. Bebell, is a *"constant voice and frequently sought presenter and advocate for the primal role of culture in establishing a quality life in urban environment."* Below, GROWW participants are pictured enjoying the program and are pictured with Ms. Bebell in the group photo.



GROWW Participants Get Tech Savvy

GROWW participants attended the Grand Opening of the *Best Buy Teen Tech Center* at the Main Library on Loyola Avenue. The opening began with a proclamation by the Honorable Latoya Cantrell, Mayor of New Orleans. Participants were enthusiastic with the program in their experiences and were fascinated by the variety of technology exhibited. They had an opportunity to experiment with some fancy technology, see below.



Participants learn how to program pictures and make background effects. Smile for the Camera!

GROWW Upcoming Summer Events

Aquarium of the Americas - July 10th • *New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA)* – July 18th
Celebration of Participation Ceremony (Family Event – July 26th • **Bring It! LIVE** - August 3rd

Positive and Encouraging Stories from Drug Court

Congratulations to Mr. Kailen Reed for “Kicking Drug Court’s Butt”!!! As a part of graduation celebration, Kailen had the following remarks about Drug Court:

“Drug Court impacted my life so much because even when I kept smoking [Judge] Ms. Cooks was still trying to help but...I had to understand that I really needed to stop smoking. Rehab was the best thing to happen to me. To be honest, if it wasn’t for rehab I wouldn’t have stopped smoking. Some days, I feel more in touch with a wide range of emotions and moods, instead of just self-medicating with weed all the time to stay “happy” all the time. With school I am performing better on my work, no longer behind on projects they are always on time, grades are getting better and my spirit for school is just amazing. Without smoking weed my school life so much better. I can do my work and not get distracted as I once did by simple things. I’m very proud of myself and Drug Court for helping me”. Mr. Reed graduated the program April 12th with major accomplishments in school, and the community by becoming a volunteer with the LASPCA and receiving summer employment with Job One.



Front Row (left to right) Kenshandra Reed, Donata Boutte, Cameron Reed, Judge Cook Calvin, Kailen Reed Lauren Boudreaux, Kimberly Beshears, Suzie. Back Row (left to right) Gwendolyn Lee, Lynette Rouzan.

Louisiana Legislature Recognizes the Importance of Courthouse Facility Dog Programs

Court appearances are a traumatic experience for youth. In an effort to help ease the anxiety and stress, Louisiana employs five highly trained Courthouse Facility Dogs to work with these youth. Dogs like Suzie, provide comfort and support in an unspoken way that encourages children to open up and feel safe.

To codify the use of these gentle giants, the Baton Rouge District Attorney’s Office and House Representative Beryl Amedèe, crafted a bill that defines Courthouse Facility Dog. The definition includes allowing children (ages 17 and under) mandatory access and use of the dogs in adult criminal proceedings across the state. While House Bill 292 does not impact the youth of Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, it does go a long way to ensure that all vulnerable youth have access to the same invaluable resources. In Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, the use of the Courthouse Facility Dog is available to all youth who require services by the court. Chief Judge Candice Bates Anderson said it best, “These dogs don’t care what you did or why you are there, they only want to love you”. The youth that meet *Bolles, Diesel, Duvall, Hayward and Suzie* find that love is a three letter word... D.O.G.



CO-DEVELOPMENT SESSION - ALL ABOARD!

MEMBER REGROUP FOR SCHOOL-BASED PARTNERSHIP



Gina B. Womack, Executive Director of FFLIC, and Ashana Bigard give a presentation to program members.

Task Force members of the Racial Justice Improvement Project and community members reconvened to discuss the implementation of the school-based partnership. The vision of this meeting was to discuss the overall mission of the partnership and prioritize goals. The goal of the partnership is to decrease, reduce, and eliminate the number of students being referred to the juvenile justice system for school-based offenses. Members were to identify and solidify a name for the partnership, review FOCUS ACTs, match appropriate community-based resources, develop a mission and vision, and provide a better understanding the end goal; hence, develop a memorandum of understanding. Members include representation from the New Orleans Police Department (pictured below from left, Officer Merrell Merricks), New Orleans Fire Fighters (Second picture below: Nathel Morgan, Tonchelle Ward, and Michael Williams) New Orleans Public School Board members, and pictured above, meeting presenters, Gina B. Womack, Executive Director of Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children (FFLIC).



PROFESSIONAL INVOLVEMENT



Judge Desiree Cook-Calvin, Supervisor of OPJC Drug Court, and staff members attended the Louisiana Association of Drug Court Professionals, April 3rd through April 5th at the New Orleans Sheraton Hotel. Other members included representative from the New Orleans District Attorney's Office.

Orleans Parish Juvenile Court Brings Awareness to Child Abuse Prevention Month

Orleans Parish Juvenile Court held the *Pinwheels for Prevention* ceremony Thursday, April 19th in Section C courtroom. April was National Child Abuse Prevention Month. Community guests and partners attended the ceremony to show their support for the cause. The pinwheel, introduced in 2008 by Child Abuse Prevention America, is the new national symbol for child abuse prevention. Research indicates that people respond to the pinwheel because it inspires whimsical imaginations of childlike notions. The pinwheel serves as a tangible example, or reminder of the great childhoods all children deserve, as they are our future. Guests included: Leon Cannizzaro, New Orleans District Attorney; Ralph Brandt, Juvenile District Attorney; Stacy LeBlanc, Executive Director of Children's Advocacy Center (CAC); and of course, Suzie, OPJC Courthouse Facility Dog.



LAW DAY

Judge Ernestine S. Gray along with fellow members of Links, Incorporated, held a “LAW DAY” at Orleans Parish Juvenile Court Thursday, May 3, 2018. Students from Bethune Elementary School participated in a “mock” trial where they served as a Judge, lawyers and jurors. Students also met Suzie, the Courthouse Facility Dog.



Link members, Ernestine S. Gray, Angelique A. Reed, and Tracy Flemings



Students are pictured during Mock trial. Students also have fun with Suzie, Courthouse Facility Dog.



COURT NEWS

A New Path



Mr. Jermeny Marsh is pictured with Judge Candice Bates-Anderson, a successful youth who beat the odds. Mr. Marsh, 21 years old, is a college student at Grambling State University majoring in Criminal Justice. Jermeny plans to attend Law School and work as a Defense Attorney.

Jermeny's message to youth is to always know that no matter what obstacles you face, *"always look at the brighter side, you never know what's in store for you."*

By T. Haines

Orleans Parish Juvenile Court Receives New Grant

On June 6, 2018, Orleans Parish Juvenile Court was awarded a grant from the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement Victim of Crime Assistance Board to assist youth victims of human trafficking, abuse and neglect.

The grant will fund a direct service provider to assist with counseling, case management, and provide technical assistance and training to OPJC staff on identifying victims for the RISE Docket. Partners working with OPJC for the RISE docket are the Children's Advocacy Center and the New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force.

For more information regarding this initiative, please visit our website at www.nola.gov/juvenile-court.



Learn more about Human Trafficking by visiting <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/state/louisiana>. To report possible human trafficking activity, contact 1-888-373-7888.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



The Orleans Parish Juvenile Court received support from community partner, *Building A Better Tomorrow, Incorporate*. This non-profit organization assists at-risk youth in the New Orleans community. The donation will support participants in the *Girls Reaching Out Works Wonders (GROWW)* program.

Support was made possible by Raytheon, *Incorporated - Intelligence, Information and Services*.

Ms. Monique M. Cook of Raytheon is pictured with GROWW Program Manager, Sondra Mullen.

3rd Annual Juvenile Justice Awareness Day Back-To-School Resource Fair!

Hosted by Orleans Parish Juvenile Court in conjunction with Families Helping Families NOLA



Saturday, August 25, 2018

10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Joe W. Brown Park Recreation Center (NORD)
5601 Read Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70127



MUSIC , FOOD, SCHOOL SUPPLIES, AND FUN!

For more information, please call (504) 255-7265

